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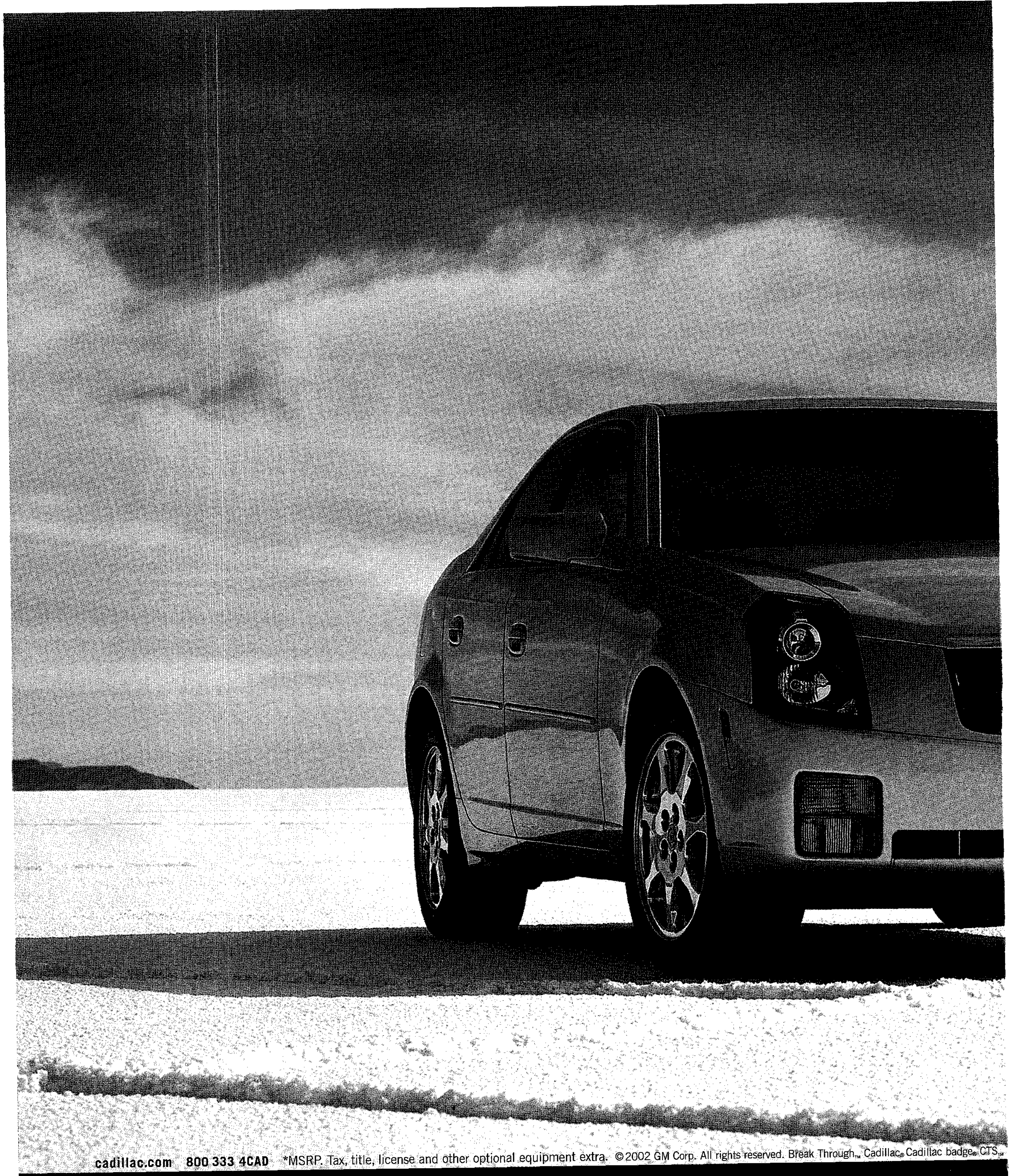
THE NEW YORKER

NOV. 4, 2002

Gahan Wilson



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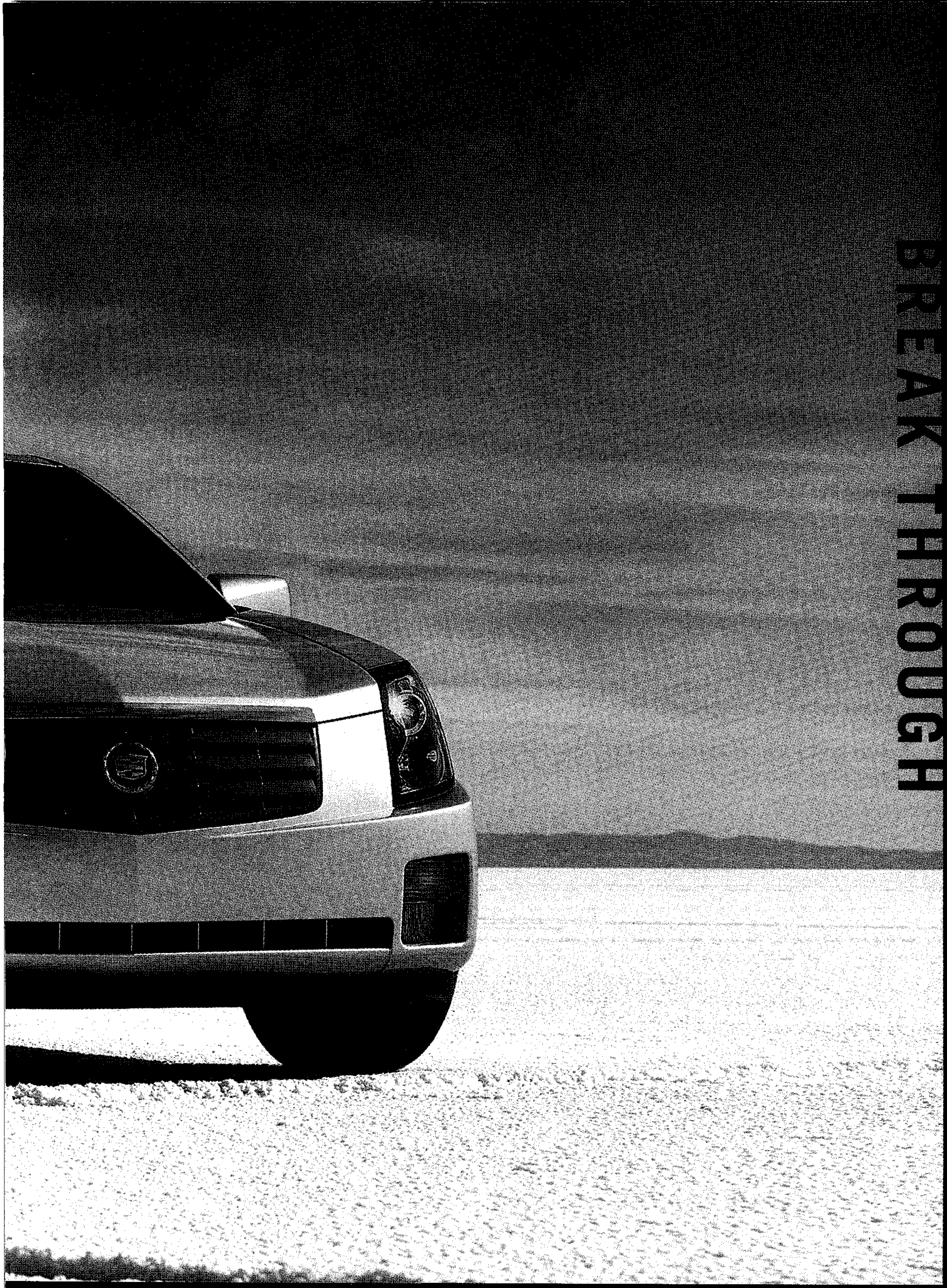

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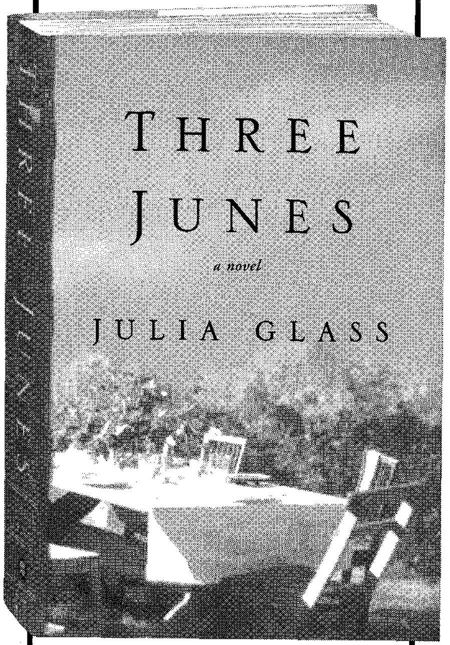

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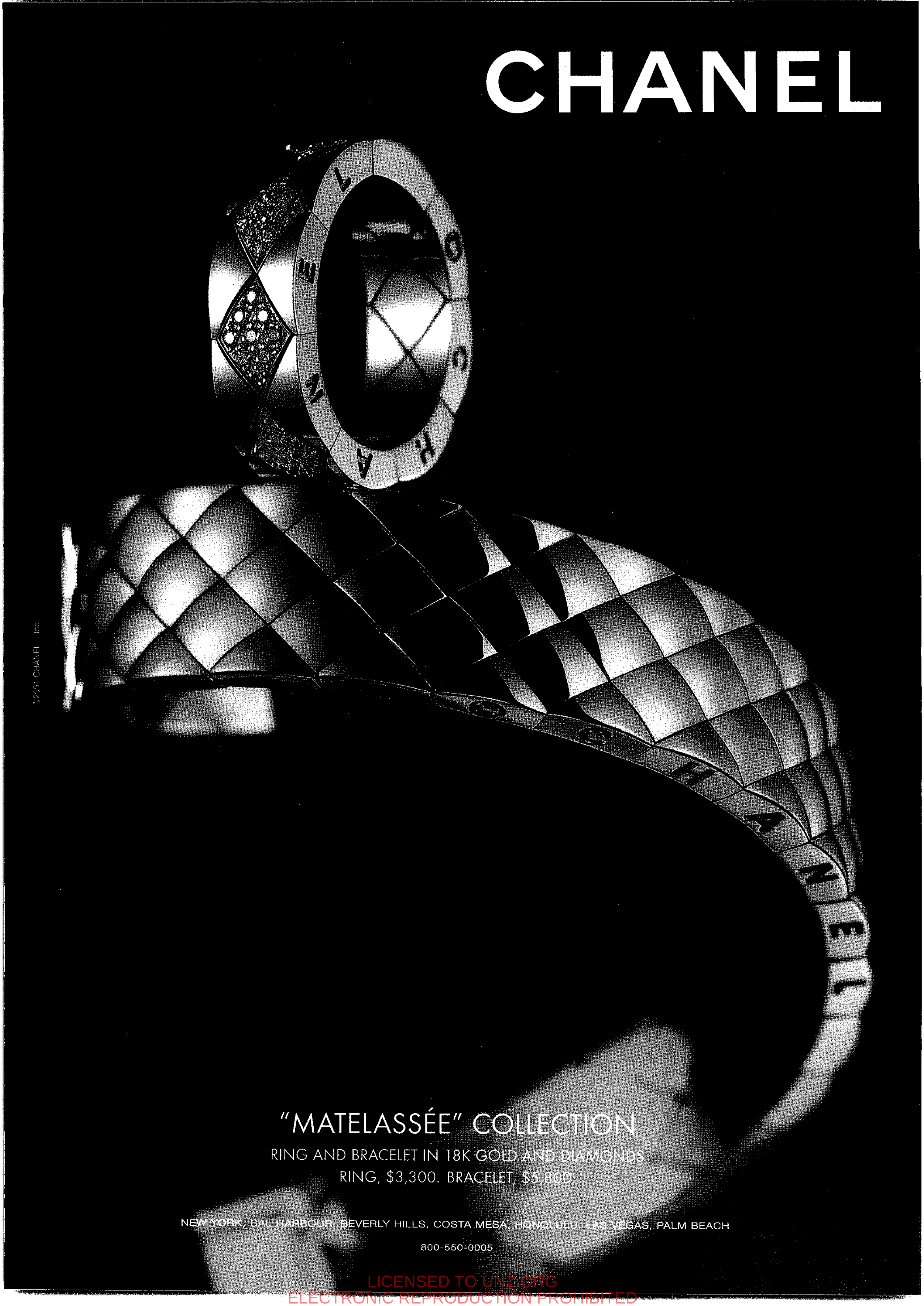

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CONTRIBUTORS

W. G. Sebald ("A Natural History of Destruction," p. 66), who died last year, is the author of four novels. His book-length poem "After Nature" came out this fall. "On the Natural History of Destruction," his final work, will be published in February.

Judith Thurman (In Fashion, p. 104) is a staff writer. Her books include "Isak Dinesen" and "Secrets of the Flesh: A Life of Colette."

Gahan Wilson (Cover) is a cartoonist. His most recent publications are "The Gravediggers' Party" and "Year of Weird," a calendar for 2003.

Nell Freudenberger (Books, p. 100) will publish her first collection of stories, "Lucky Girls," next year.

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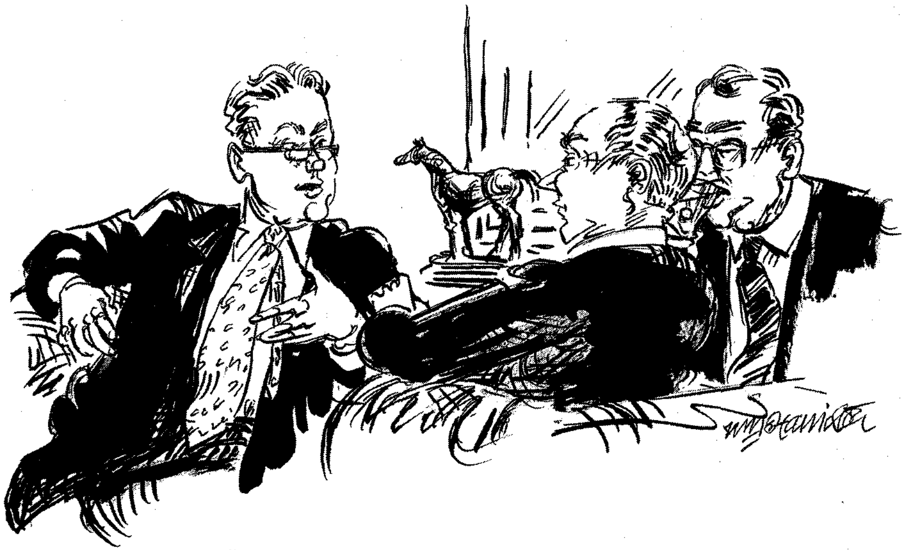
Anthony Lane ("Mondo Bond," p. 78; Cinema, p. 110) has just published "Nobody's Perfect: Writings from *The New Yorker*."

Antonya Nelson (Fiction, p. 83) is the author, most recently, of "Female Trouble," a collection of short stories.

Roz Chast (The Back Page, p. 112) is a regular contributor to the magazine. Her latest book of illustrations is "Weird and Wonderful Words." ♦



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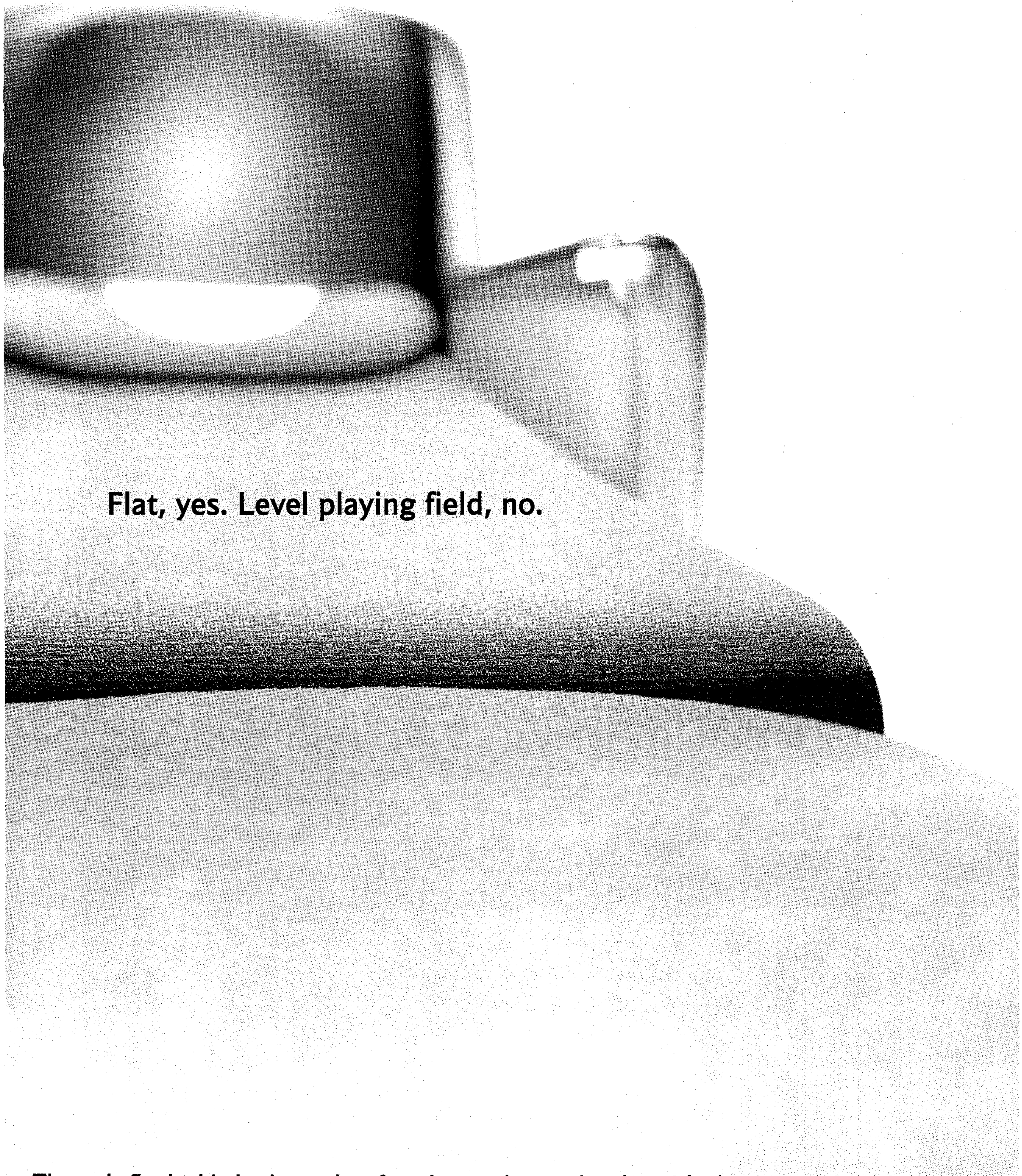

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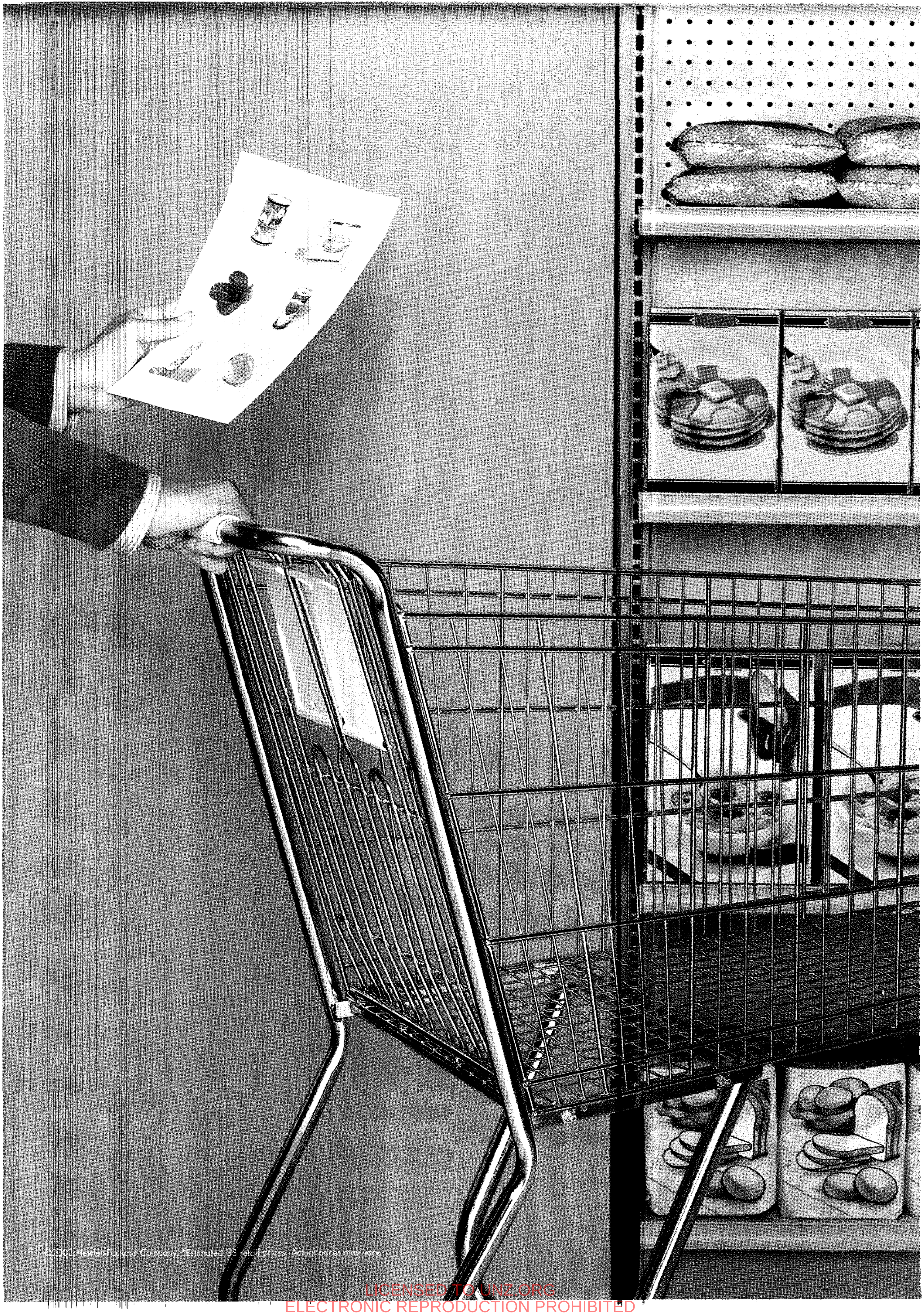

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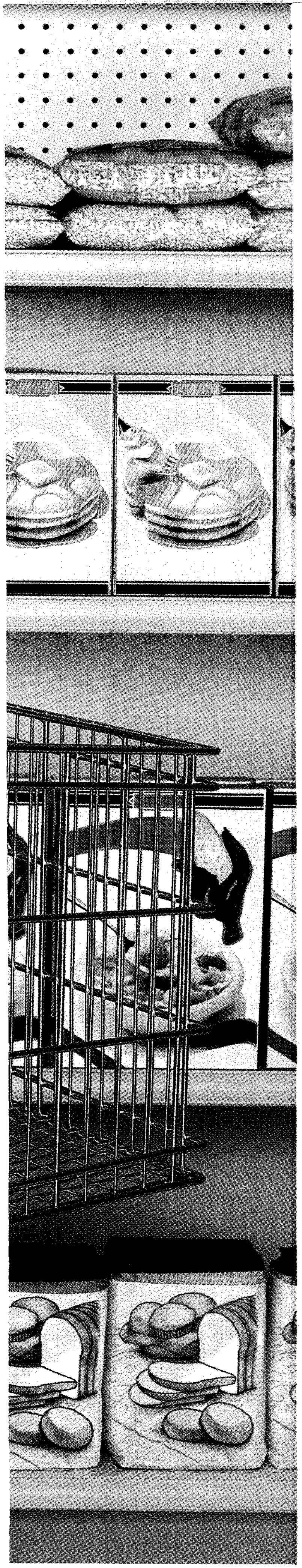

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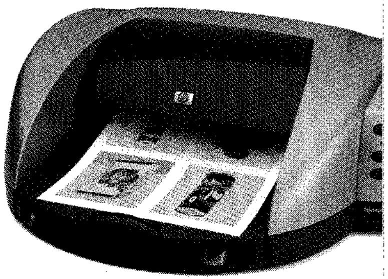

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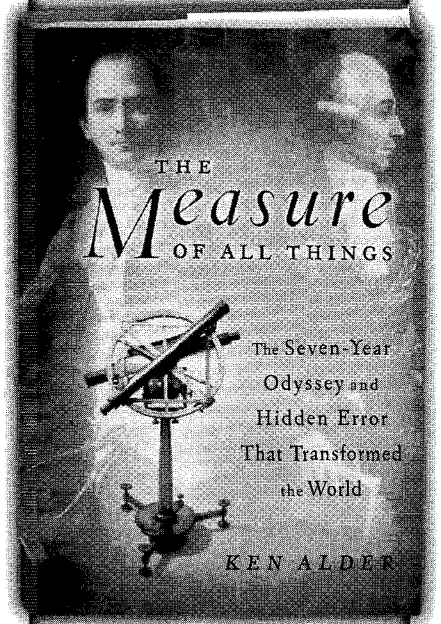
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THE OIL TRAP

The small country of São Tomé and Príncipe may be able to leverage its potential four billion barrels of oil reserves to gain a position as an American favorite, and West Africa may be "the fastest-growing source of oil and gas for the American market," as Vice-President Cheney says ("Our New Best Friend," by Jon Lee Anderson, October 7th). But total proven reserves for all of Africa amount to little more than seventy-five billion barrels, while the Middle East has six hundred and eighty-five billion barrels, or around two-thirds of global reserves. (Russia, often cited as another alternative, has just under forty-nine billion barrels in proven reserves.) The fact is that there has not been a truly major new oil discovery since Alaska and the North Sea in the nineteen-sixties, and the consensus is that there is unlikely to be one. Unfortunately, the long-term reliance of the West on Middle East oil is inescapable. São Tomé may have stumbled on a source of wealth that is, from its perspective, unimaginable, but it has not yet provided a lasting answer to what is arguably America's greatest strategic weakness.
Bob Gray
New York City

São Tomé faces a paradox particular to our time: the petroleum that would make it rich may also contribute to its destruction, as it is unusually vulnerable to the effects of the climate change brought on by the burning of fossil fuels. As President Fradique de Menezes said in his address to the General Assembly in September, "If sea levels rise from global warming, my beautiful island home will disappear beneath the waves."
Jonas Hagen
Brooklyn, N.Y.

COLUMBUS THE SAILOR

I have no wish to defend Columbus the man. He certainly set the precedent for rape, pillage, and murder in the New World. But I want to defend Columbus the seaman from Elizabeth Kolbert's suggestion that he was incompetent (Books, October 14th & 21st). Before his crossing, Columbus had sailed to most of the major ports of the Mediterranean and of Europe's Atlantic Coast, and to the Canaries, West Africa, and probably Iceland. To paraphrase an adage about test pilots, there were few fools who survived as fifteenth-century seamen. Like most of his peers, he was a "latitude sailor." Unable to accurately determine longitude, these sailors would get on a familiar latitude where the winds were known to be favorable. Although they didn't understand the physics, they were aware of the wind patterns that created the easterlies and westerlies. Columbus was skillful in exploiting this knowledge to travel back and forth in latitudes that, in contrast, had not been well travelled at all.
Robert F. Sensibaugh
Rancho Santa Fe, Calif.

PRESIDENTS AND KINGS

It's nothing new, as Hendrik Hertzberg points out, for Presidents to find a way around the provision of the Constitution giving Congress the power to declare war (The Talk of the Town, September 30th). But repetition doesn't make it any less wrong. The problem is the same as that cited by Abraham Lincoln in 1848, when he was a congressman, in a letter to his law partner: "Kings had always been involving and impoverishing their people in wars, pretending generally, if not always, that the good of the people was the object." This, he wrote, the framers "understood to be the most oppressive of all Kingly oppressions." The view that Presidents had the authority to make the decision to go to war, he added, "destroys the whole matter, and places our Presidents where Kings have always stood."
Andy Jacobs, Jr.
Indianapolis, Ind.

•

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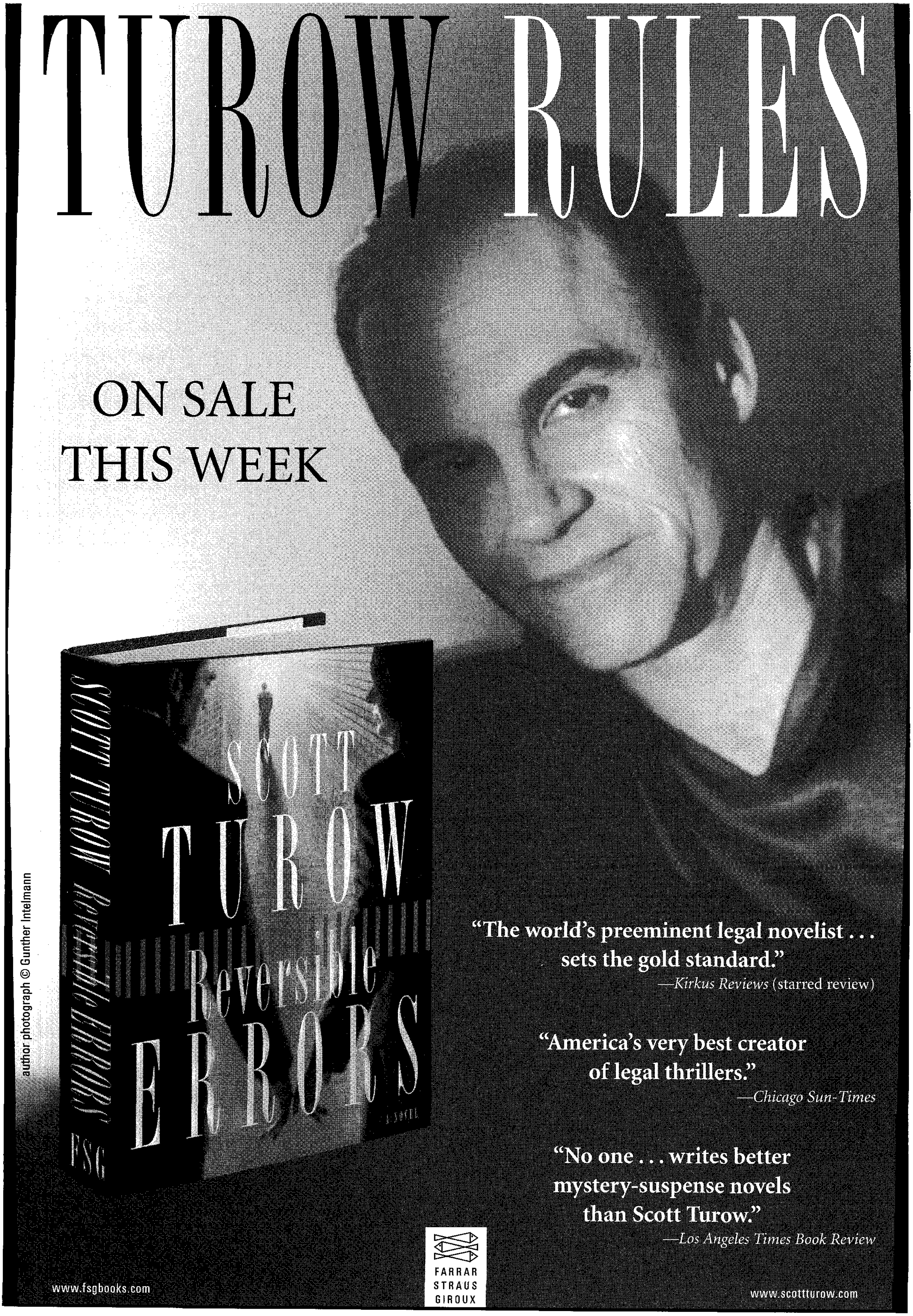
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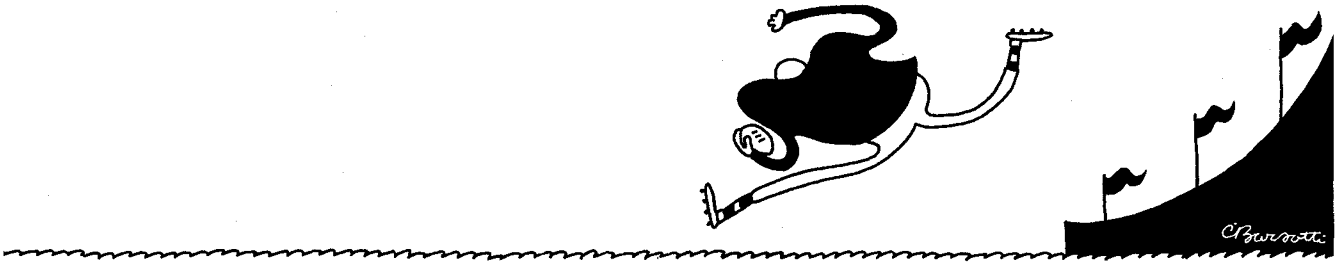

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ANTIGONE
The National Theatre of Greece brings the Sophocles play to City Center for six performances only, Oct. 30-Nov. 3. (In Greek, with English supertitles.) (131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

BEWILDERNESS
The British comedian Bill Bailey brings his one-man show to New York. In previews. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

BIG AL
A young screenwriter obsesses over his hero, Al Pacino, in a play by Bryan Goluboff. In previews. Opens Nov. 5 at 7. (Arclight, 152 W. 71st St. 239-6200.)

BOOK OF DAYS
The Signature Theatre Company's Lanford Wilson season continues with a new drama, in which a suspicious death disturbs the tranquillity of a small Midwestern town. Marshall Mason is the director. In previews. Opens Nov. 3 at 8. (555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

CHEKHOV NOW FESTIVAL
The annual celebration of the life and works of Anton Chekhov includes Ellen Beckerman's "Gull," and a new musical called "Moscow," a gay-themed adaptation of "Three Sisters." The series begins with "The Lady with the Dog" on Oct. 30 at 8. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 414-7773.)

THE FOURTH WALL
Sandy Duncan and Charles Kimbrough return to the stage in a new play by A. R. Gurney, about suburban entrapment. David Saint directs. Previews begin Oct. 30. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

HOLLYWOOD ARMS
Linda Lavin, Michele Pawk, and Frank Wood lead the cast in a play based on Carol Burnett's memoir of her childhood, written by Ms. Burnett and the late Carrie Hamilton, her daughter. Harold Prince is the director. In previews. Opens Oct. 31 at 6:30. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

LOVE IN THE AGE OF NARCISSISM
Seven hard-to-please New Yorkers look for romance, in a new comedy by Brad Desch. In previews. Opens Oct. 31 at 8. (Directors Company, 311 W. 43rd St. 206-1515.)

THE METAMORPHOSIS
Black Moon Theatre Company's "expressionistic realist" adaptation of Kafka's tale combines theatre and film. Opens Oct. 31 at 8. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			30	31	1	2
3	4	5				

SON OF DRAKULA
David Drake ("The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me") unveils a new solo show. Opens Oct. 30 at 7. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

THE THREE BIRDS
The young British playwright Joanna Laurens has adapted her drama from a lost Sophocles tragedy about a man, his wife, and her sister. Opens Oct. 31 at 8. (Gale Gates et al., 37 Main St., Dumbo, Brooklyn. 212-352-7085.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AMOUR
Marcel Aymé's wartime fable of a dried-up clerk who develops the ability to walk through walls only to stumble into a doomed love affair has been translated into a sugarcoated musical, with wordy lyrics glossed into English by Jeremy Sams, who evidently is a fan of both Gilbert and Sullivan and Dr. Seuss. This plastically pretty confection evokes every French stereotype imaginable—baguettes, gendarmes, an artist with a beret, the Eiffel Tower, a nun, and a prostitute. All that's missing is Pepé Le Pew. As the wall-walker, the wanly amorous Malcolm Gets puts more passion into an office skit than into his wooing; even then, Bill Nolte, as his befuddled boss, steals the scene. Still, there's plenty of *charme* to go around, thanks largely to the bright-eyed Melissa Errico, who livens up the proceedings with her neat, nip-waisted frocks and her effortless, crystalline warbling. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

BAILEGANGAIRE
The Irish Repertory Theatre's staging of Tom Murphy's play stars Pauline Flanagan as a senile woman who never reaches the end of her nightly yarn about a local laughing contest. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

BETTY RULES
A kinetic alterna-rock musical, directed by Michael Greif ("Rent"), chronicling the nearly two-decade-long career of a real-life girl band called Betty and its members' long battle to keep the group and their sanity intact on the road, at home, onstage, and even in therapy. The group was formed in 1985 in the D.C. suburbs by two Jewish sisters—Elizabeth (an angry-funny redhead who looks like Laraine Newman) and Amy Ziff (zaftig, with blond dreads)—with Alyson Palmer, an African-American singer, bassist, and all-around bombshell. For an hour and a half, the women create a collage of scenes and songs that would resemble a good night on "Saturday Night Live" if the guest band were also to perform the skits. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 239-6200.)

BURNING BLUE
A fatal accident involving three F-18 jets is at the center of this drama by D. M. W. Greer. Chad Lowe leads the cast. (Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

BURN THIS
In Lanford Wilson's 1987 drama, an angry straight man meets his gay brother's roommates after his brother's death, forcing the characters to confront the lies they have told in their lives. The piece is too long, and feels longer still because half the characters are so badly drawn. Catherine Keener's listless, flailing performance as one of the roommates shows no sign of the razor-sharp presence that she projects in her films, but Edward Norton is brilliant as the surviving brother. He's a great stage actor, an heir to the suave and psychologically riveting Frederic March. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

CHEAT
Two women lose their jobs at a munitions plant at the end of the Second World War, in a new drama by Julie Jensen. (Women's Project Theatre, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200. Closes Nov. 3.)

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS
In the Aquila Theatre Company's excellent production of Shakespeare's intricately foolish story, the laughs are many and the delights deep. The seven cast members mix remarkable range with insane energy. (Harold Clurman, 412 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

DEBBIE DOES DALLAS
Sherie Rene Scott has the title role, in a stage adaptation written by Erica Schmidt of the classic porn film. (Jane Street Theatre, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

THE EXONERATED
Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen's play, directed by Bob Balaban, is the most basic kind of theatre: no sets, no costumes, no songs, no spectacle. What it does have to offer is extraordinary news: the harrowing stories of a handful of souls who have spent up to twenty-two years on death row before walking free. Put together from interviews and from the public record, the play is performed by ten actors whose lines bear witness both to the ineptness of the American judicial system and to the poetry of ordinary citizens. Its stories are stark and cunningly orchestrated. (10/28/02) (45 Bleecker Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

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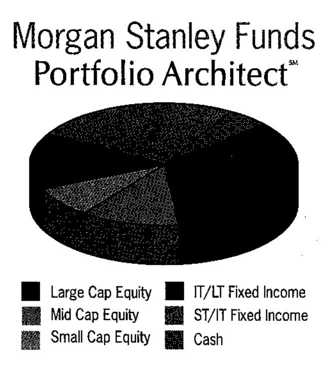

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FLOWER DRUM SONG
A revival of the 1958 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, starring Lea Salonga and directed by Robert Longbottom, with a new book by David Henry Hwang. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE
Edie Falco stars in Terence McNally's sentimental two-character study about a man and a woman who are marginalized by life while struggling to embrace it. Joe Mantello is the director. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

FUENTEOVEJUNA
The National Asian-American Theatre Company presents a new version of Lope de Vega's seventeenth-century Spanish play about a citizens' revolt against a dastardly military commander. The terrific cast—particularly C. S. Lee as the commander, Lydia Gaston as a girl he wants to violate, and Mel Duane Gionson as her father, the mayor—make what could have been mere melodrama into a thoughtful inquiry into how much tyranny is bearable. (Intar 53, 508 W. 53rd St. 718-623-1672. Closes Nov. 2.)

HAIRSPRAY
This musical-comedy version of the 1988 John Waters movie takes off from the opening number and never loses its momentum. In Baltimore in 1962, the rotund teen Tracy Turnblad (Marissa Jaret Winokur) wants to dance, make out with the best-looking boy in town, and integrate "The Corny Collins Show," a local teen-dance TV program. David Rockwell's sets and William Ivey Long's costumes combine to highlight the period artifacts in an ecstasy of gorgeous bad taste, offered with just enough invention to achieve lyrical wit. With the great Harvey Fierstein, plucked, shaved, and padded, as Tracy's mother, Edna Turnblad. Jack O'Brien is the director. (9/2/02) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Nashville's Old Crow Medicine Show, at 9C and Tobacco Road (see Night Life).

REUBEN COX

HARLEM SONG
Essentially a revue, using both old and new compositions, selected or written by the director George C. Wolfe and the show's talented music supervisors, Zane Mark and Daryl Waters. The Harlem of "Harlem Song" is not an urban wasteland in the process of reinventing itself. It is a realm of legend and lore, and a mythical homeland, which it is our duty as theatregoers, as citizens, to celebrate. This is a point worth making, but not one that bears much repeating. (8/19 & 26/02) (Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 307-7171.)

IN REAL LIFE
Charlayne Woodard's one-woman show chronicles the time in her early twenties when she moved to New York City with stars in her eyes, intending to become a "serious" actress. Instead of performing in Chekhov's "Three Sisters," as she had hoped, Woodard finds herself starring opposite Nell Carter in "Ain't Misbehavin'," a Fats Waller musical revue. Woodard performs her material enthusiastically, but, perhaps because she covers only a short time in her still young career, there isn't much depth to the life lessons she imparts. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

JOLSON & COMPANY
In their new play, Stephen Mo Hanan and Jay Berkow pay tribute to the great vaudeville songster and film actor Al Jolson. Hanan channels Jolson, singing fourteen of the songs he made famous, including "You Made Me Love You," "My Mammy," and "Toot, Toot, Tootsie, Goodbye." The songs emerge through the familiar device of an interview between a late-life Jolson and a radio host, in which the singer reminisces about his childhood, his career, and his four wives. The characters in Jolson's flashbacks are played by Robert Ari and Nancy Anderson, whose adept transformations balance Hanan's inevitable hamminess. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

JULIUS CAESAR
In the Axis Company's production, George Demas plays the imperial leader with echoes of contemporary chieftains—political and corporate, American and foreign. (One Sheridan Sq. 807-9300.)

LITTLE HAM
Langston Hughes wrote the story on which this musical is based, and his version of feel-good black nationalism comes through. A treacly cliché, the story centers around Hamlet Hitchcock Jones, Harlem's black Lothario—a no-goodnik with lots of charm. Mighty attractive to the ladies, Little Ham yearns for Miss Tiny Lee (Monica L. Patton), a pillar of responsibility who runs a beauty salon. But Tiny won't commit to Ham unless he straightens up and flies right. This becomes increasingly difficult for him to do once he hooks up with two white crooks (Richard Vida and Jerry Gallagher) who want to take over Harlem's numbers racket, using Ham as their go-between. While thin on book and too familiar by half in its direction—it's "Bubbling Brown Sugar" meets "Smokey Joe's Café"—there are some great performances, the best being Brenda Baxton's turn as the night-club performer Sugar Lou Bird, and the excellent Joe Wilson, Jr., as Miss Bird's gay consort, Jimmy. (10/7/02) (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

A MAN OF NO IMPORTANCE
The problem with this musical, based on the 1994 film about a repressed Irish bus conductor who joins an amateur dramatic society—is that it doesn't know whether it wants to be art or commerce. Its creators, Terrence McNally (book) and Stephen Flaherty (music), eschewed the joyful vulgarity of the show-biz musical only to embrace the aridity of avant-garde precepts. As a result, the show is freighted with psychological baggage that the genre is incapable of carrying. Alfie Byrne (the appealing Roger Rees) reads Oscar Wilde to his passengers by day; by night, in his fantasy life, he walks with him. But, except for his Wildean passion, there's nothing noteworthy about Alfie or his world. He is a prisoner of Catholic guilt, a shy, strangulated soul who lives with his sister (Faith Prince). In the end, the production's inveterate tastefulness is its undoing. (10/28/02) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

MOVIN' OUT
Twyla Tharp's dance-musical, based on the songs of Billy Joel. John Selya stars. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

MY OLD LADY
Three seasoned performers—Siân Phillips and Jan Maxwell, who play an aged mother-daughter duo, and Peter Friedman, who plays an interloper in their closed world—hash out an unlikely but predictable drama, set, improbably, in Paris. Israel Horovitz's glib script disguises a bid for commercial appeal as a quest for personal identity, but he fools nobody. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD
Julia Carey directs a revival of Timberlake Wertenbaker's play about a group of Australian convicts who stage a Restoration comedy. (The Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 875-7995.)

PEARL THEATRE COMPANY
Performances of Gotthold Lessing's eighteenth-century drama "Nathan the Wise," set in Jerusalem during the Crusades, run in repertory with Oliver Goldsmith's 1773 comedy, "She Stoops to Conquer." (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

PRUNE DANISH
Jackie Mason is back on Broadway with a new one-man show. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

RASHOMON
The first play in the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre's season, based on the Japanese tale. (West End Theatre, 263 W. 86th St. 279-4200.)

THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF ARTURO UI
Al Pacino leads the cast in a National Actors Theatre staging of Brecht's comic parable about the rise of Hitler. Simon McBurney is the director. Closes Nov. 3. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 239-6200.)

THE ROMANCE OF MAGNO RUBIO
The May-Yi Theatre Company presents the story of an illiterate Filipino farm worker's struggle to conduct an epistolary romance with an American woman. (DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

ROOMTONE
The experimental theatre group Elevator Repair Service celebrates its tenth anniversary with a new production at P.S. 122. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE
Rupert Holmes's touching and hilarious one-man tribute to the unsinkable George Burns and his more-than-a-sidekick wife, Gracie Allen, almost makes the audience feel more for the cigar-puffing comic in death than in life. As Burns, Frank Gorshin bonds with the audience through a steady string of jokes (some funny, others rueful) and the judicious use of a little soft-shoe. Like both "Yankee Doodle Dandy," the bio-pic of the vaudevillian George M. Cohan, and the sleight-of-hand artist Ricky Jay's card-trick shows, "Goodnight Gracie" is not just a showcase for one man; it's a showcase for an era. John Tillinger is the director. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

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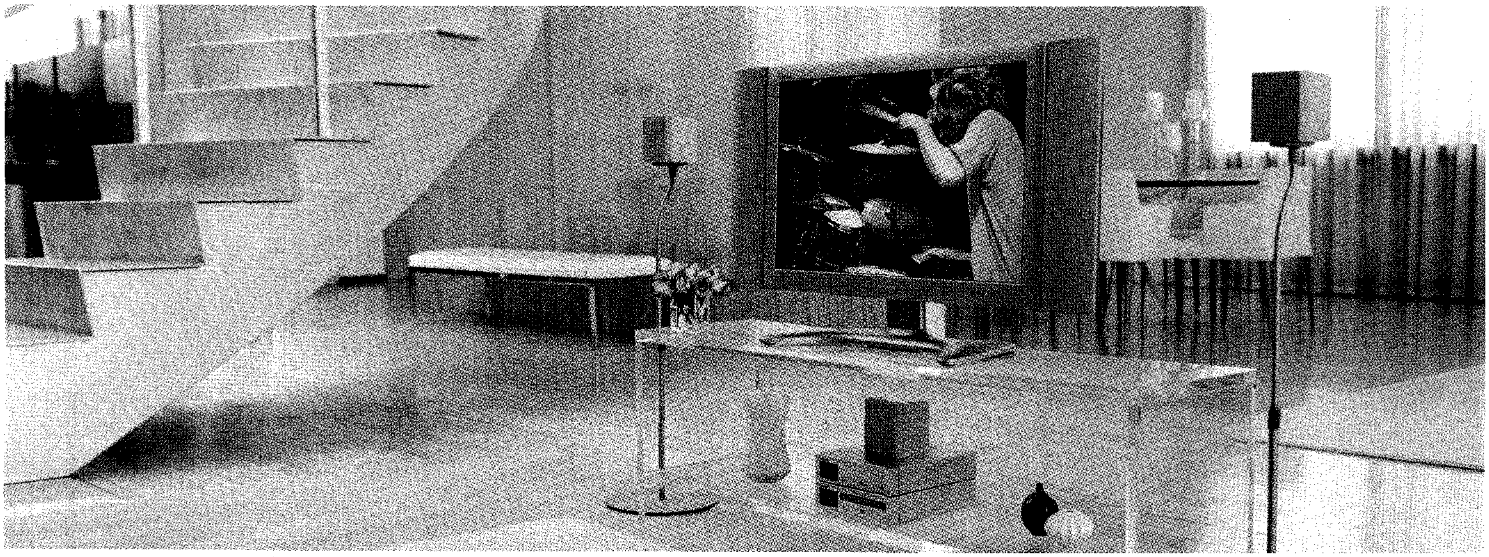

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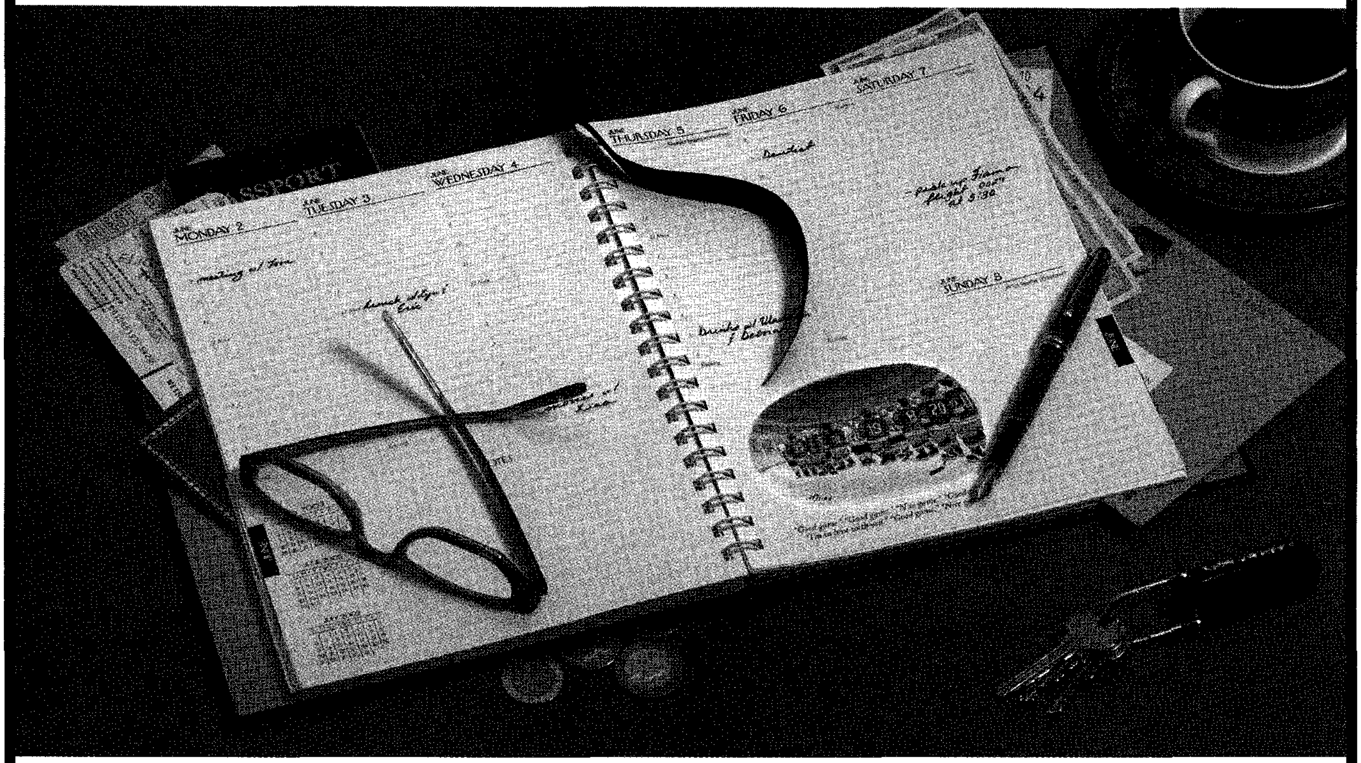

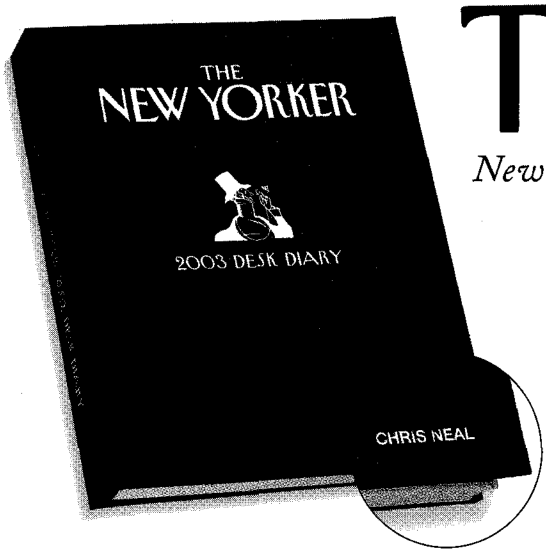

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TAKE ME OUT
Richard Greenberg's exhilarating production premièred at London's Donmar Warehouse, before coming to New York's Public, where director Joe Mantello has mounted it with crisp, good-humored flair. The play's mischievous title—at once a paean and a plea—hints at Greenberg's equally mischievous ambition: to marry "the old ballgame" with what you could call "the new ballgame": gay politics. "Take Me Out" is about a baseball colossus named Darren Lemming (superbly played by Daniel Sunjata, a young African-American actor), who is a center fielder for the champion New York Empires. One day, for no good reason other than that it suits his sense of invulnerability to do so—he announces at a press conference that he's gay. The news creates an almost seismic disturbance for everyone but Lemming himself, whose attitude is, sex aside, "I'd rather just play ball." (7/22/02) (425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

TEDDY TONIGHT!
Laurence Luckinbill stars in his solo play about Teddy Roosevelt. (Abingdon, 312 W. 36th St. 206-1515.)

THE WATER COOLERS
A musical revue about office life, with a cast of five, including Marya Grandy of the local a-cappella group Five Floor Monica. (Dillons, 245 W. 54th St. 239-6200.)

WOYZECK
Tom Waits, Kathleen Brennan, and Robert Wilson have teamed up again to put a music-theatre spin on Georg Büchner's 1837 play. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

YELLOWMAN
Relentless and riveting, Dael Orlandersmith's two-person show puts a love story at the heart of a merciless study of self-hatred and suspicion among dark-skinned and light-skinned African-Americans. Orlandersmith and Howard W. Overshown both play a host of characters from two South Carolina families. As Eugene, the "Yellowman" of the title, Overshown conveys vulnerability and stubborn optimism, but his hopefulness is overpowered by the rage of a pair of darker characters. In this case, they are literally darker: there's Alma (Orlandersmith), who hates herself and her mother for her blackness, and Yellowman's own dark-skinned father, who hates his son for the accident of his pale skin color. Orlandersmith's storytelling exposes painful wounds in the black-American psyche, but her hectoring delivery often gives the play the taint of harangue. (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.
BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.
CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.
CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.
DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.
FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.
42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.
THE GOAT; OR, WHO IS SYLVIA
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.
THE GRADUATE
Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.
THE GUYS
The Flea, 41 White St. 206-1515.
I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.
INTO THE WOODS
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.
LOVE, JANIS
Village Theatre, 158 Bleecker St. 307-4100.
MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.
METAMORPHOSES
Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.
LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.
OKLAHOMA!
Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.
PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
PROOF
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.
PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.
STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.
THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.
TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

TABLES FOR TWO

DOS CAMINOS
373 Park Ave. S., at 26th St. (294-1000)—It's an old Mexican recipe, Manhattan-style: a din that hits you like the roar at a bullfight; a décor that embraces you like an adobe; a margarita that sets your temples pulsing; salt-infused chips and guacamole; a main course for the toothless (what is it—a taco, a tostada, an enchilada?); and, what the hell, another margarita. But in this hopping six-week-old establishment in the Flatiron district, these clichés have been raised to a new level of sophistication. The design, which landed on the front page of the *Times'* House & Home section, domesticates a bank-size main dining room with amber-lit earth colors, semi-private booths, and hand-carved wooden pendants, which glow like jack-o'-lanterns. A more intimate back room is open for less clamorous dining. According to a spokesperson, the name ("Two Roads") refers not only to the restaurant's location on Park Avenue but to the menu, which is "classic Mexican in a contemporary style—no lard."

Standouts among the appetizers are two vibrant seviches—one with red snapper, scallops, and spicy mango, the other with bigeye tuna and a salsa of chile and citrus. The chicken enchilada deserves a more elevated name, given its lusty marriage of spit-roasted fowl with a tomatillo-serrano salsa and Oaxacan cheese. The best of the grilled dishes may be a beautifully blackened heap of charred shrimp, accompanied by a mole of pumpkin seeds, poblano rice, and sautéed watercress. The desserts are as richly indulgent as a Mayan altarpiece. And to ease it all down you can take your pick from more than a hundred and fifty tequilas. The executive sous-chef, Ross Gill, says that personal taste inspired the menu. "Last summer," he says, "the chef, Dudley Nieto, and I spent six weeks in Mexico, sampling local restaurants in different regions, from Puebla to the Yucatán. We took the food we liked best and brought it back to New York." (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $15-$24.)

—*Charles Michener*

UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL
Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.
URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.
THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

PARSONS DANCE COMPANY
The ten-member troupe performs repertory works and several premières, including "Gloria," by Lila York, and "Too Many Cooks!," by the company's founder, David Parsons. This week also features "Kind of Blue," set to music by Miles Davis, and "The Hunt." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Oct. 29-Nov. 1 at 8, Nov. 2 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 3 at 2 and 7:30.)

"SOULAR POWER'D"
The mind-bogglingly adept head-spinner Gabriel (Kwikstep) Dionisio, who directs this fifteen-person hip-hop extravaganza with his wife, Anita (Rokafella) Garcia, spent most of his childhood in foster homes, bouncing from Ozone Park, Queens, to Red Hook, Brooklyn. "So I was never really down for one clique," he says. "Breaking is all about who's known—you know, the name on your shirt. But I was with people—at block parties and community centers and basement parties—who didn't have any names and who were talented." "Soular Power'd" shares the loose, celebratory spirit of those low-profile parties, with casually excellent conga drumming, turntabling, rapping, and, as one character in the show puts it, "beating, hopping, locking, and up-rising." (New Victory Theatre, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Oct. 30 and Nov. 1 at 7, Nov. 2 at 2 and 7, and Nov. 3 at noon and 5.)

"SUPPLEMENT"
The satisfyingly oddball choreographer Dean Moss insists there is a story to his latest group work: "The story is, Kacie goes to a Rolfer." But what we see is both more antic and more elliptical. While the dancer Kacie Chang, wearing a ruby choker and a yellow cocktail dress, prepares for the performance (which is already under way), the four other cast members engage in enigmatic tasks—massaging their bellies, building a bed of rubber bricks to lie on while singing in Japanese. Just as their deeds begin to make narrative sense, the performers stop and do nothing at all. "I touch boredom," Moss says. "Like many artists, I want to see how close I can come to that death and still keep the viewer involved." (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Nov. 1-3 and Nov. 5 at 8:30. Through Nov. 9.)

"EPHEMERAL MOMENTS"
Choreographer Susan Cherniak presents two premières and one repertory work, "Engravings in Space," performed by Cherniak Dance, with live musical accompaniment. Premières include "Pastoral Impressions," set to Peter Schickele's "American Dreams String Quartet No. 1," and "Grazed by a Comet," which imagines five women reacting to the passing of a comet over the earth. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 334-7479. Nov. 1-3 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

CMJ MUSIC MARATHON
The frenetic carnival of independent music brings hundreds of performers, industry scouts, and fans to New York City for four days, starting Oct. 30. Last year's festival was diminished because of September 11th, but this year CMJ returns with a significantly beefed-up lineup. CMJ's higher profile is thanks in part to a simple geographic coincidence: bands from New York, many of whom will play sold-out shows in front of friendly crowds, have been the toast of the past year. Expect to see indie kids and adults rushing from venue to venue, festival badges flapping on their chests, meeting, greeting, and grabbing at the next big thing. For more information, visit www.cmj.com/marathon.

TODAY

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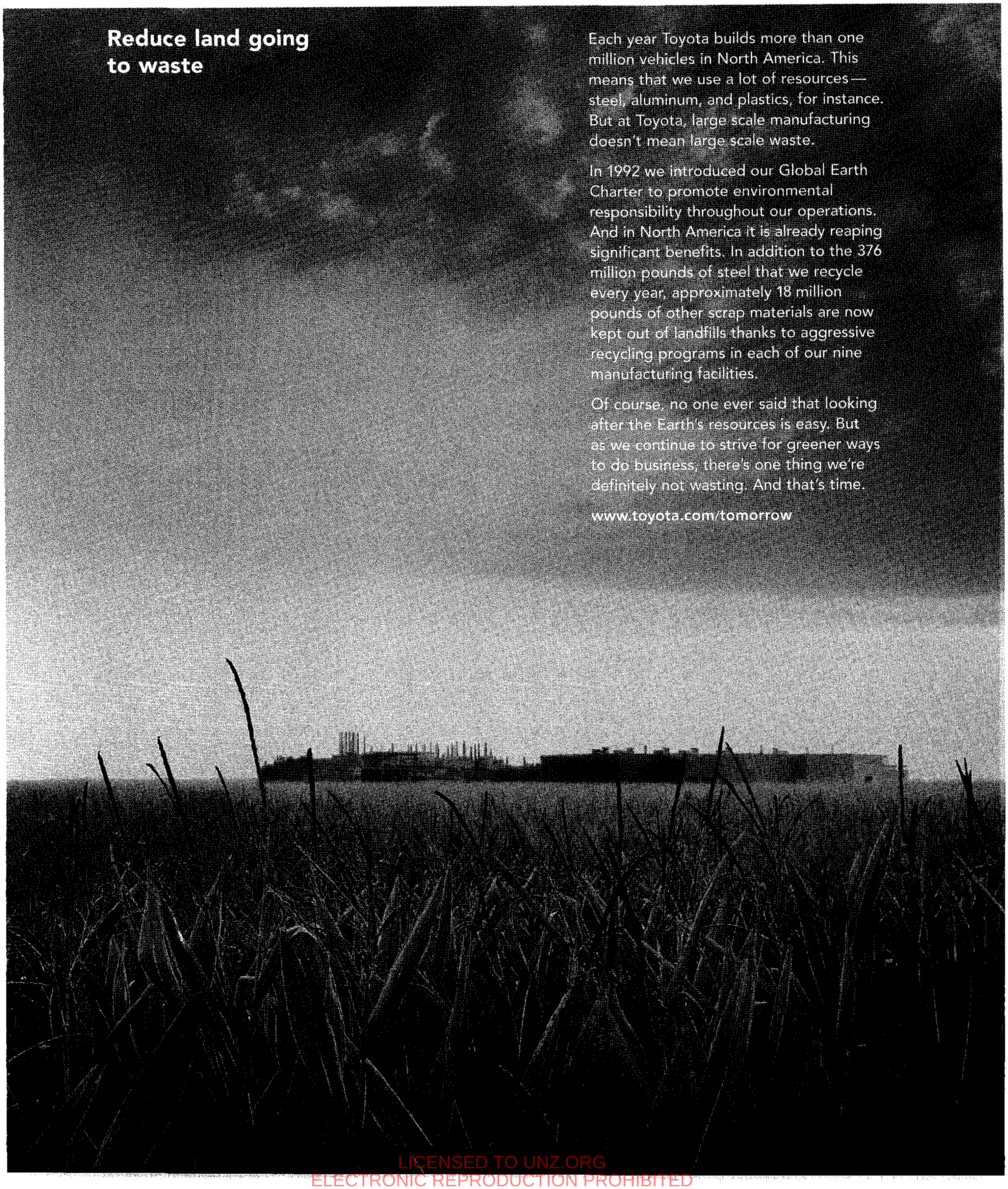

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The Flaming Lips back Beck, and play their own music, at the Beacon Theatre.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

JURASSIC 5
Having emerged two years ago from the L.A. underground scene with the LP "Quality Control," these four m.c.s and two d.j.s return with a new album of old-school inspired rhymes, "Power in Numbers." (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 307-7171. Oct. 30 at 8.)

BECK AND THE FLAMING LIPS
The genius collagist of folk, punk, rock, and hip-hop is on tour in support of his latest release, the introspective "Sea Change." That he's chosen Oklahoma's weirdest exports, the Flaming Lips, as his backing band goes to show you just how far the anointed loser has come. The Lips (who will play an opening set before joining Beck) live and die by the creative mind of bandleader Wayne Coyne, who likes to design tripped-out soundscapes and concert experiences with confetti, hand puppets, and video projections. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 307-7171. Oct. 30-31 at 8.)

MEDESKI MARTIN & WOOD
The wildly industrious acid-jazz hipsters. (Hammerstein Ballroom. Oct. 31 at 7:30.)

"FREEDOM NOW AND THEN"
The great man himself may not be performing, but an evening devoted to the music and influence of the drummer Max Roach brings out many of the legendary percussionist's most admirable progeny, including **Joe Chambers, Billy Hart,** and the organizer of the program, the up-and-coming **Ali Jackson.** (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, 165 W. 65th St., 10th floor. 721-6500. Oct. 31-Nov. 2 at 8.)

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK
The riveting all-female a-cappella group. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 1 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Nov. 1 at 8: For twenty years now **Fred Ho** and his **Afro Asian Music Ensemble** have been defending the turf where the personal and the political slam headfirst into the maelstrom of new jazz. The leader, a fiercely imaginative baritone saxophonist and composer, and his tenacious crew will celebrate the event in style. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. For more information, call 545-7536.)

WILLIE NELSON
Nelson, a hell-raising performer from a lost age, is back on the road again. (Beacon Theatre. Nov. 3-4 at 8.)

TOMASZ STANKO
One of the world's most original and inventive jazz trumpeters, this native of Poland is known for deeply expressive horn work, parcelled out in judicious long held notes and darting phrasing. This is Stanko's début tour in the United States, and for those in the know, it's a major event. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Nov. 4 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Nov. 2: The mandolin virtuoso **Johnny Staats** and the guitarist **Robert Shafer** serve up a night of genuine old-time music.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Oct. 31: A night of techno-laden jam-band music with the **New Deal.** Nov. 3: **Junior Brown,** an Indiana cowboy with a deep voice reminiscent of Johnny Cash, impeccable guitar credentials, and a flair for songs about heartbreak, hillbillies, and fools.

CBGB & OMFUG
315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—A narrow, graffiti-strewn cave packed every evening with new and used bands. ♦ Next door, at CB's Gallery, **Bee and Flower** plays a short set on Oct. 30. The haunting Brooklyn-based quintet specializes in dark songs with lilting violin lines and fine lap-steel playing.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Oct. 31: **Enon,** an N.Y.C. outfit known for manic mood swings, has a synthetic sound that's filled out with crunchy guitar hooks, pop-vocal melodies and hard-rock bass lines, shares a bill with the **!!!,** the **Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Calexico,** and **Blonde Redhead.** Nov. 1: Glasgow's **Idlewild** offers a set of ear-cleaning revival punk.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Nov. 1: **Maxi Geil! & Play Colt** is an art-rock collective that's obsessed with the art world. References abound to Gavin Brown's Enterprise and other Chelsea galleries. As their front man Guy Richard Smit, who sounds a bit like Bryan Ferry in the shower, sings, "I'm your singing, painting Renaissance man." Their shows are flamboyant affairs that use youthful enthusiasm to make up for what they apparently lack in spare cash.

LAKESIDE LOUNGE
162 Avenue B (529-8463)—Oct. 31: **Mary Lee's Corvette** reinterprets Bob Dylan's classic album "Blood on the Tracks."

9C
700 E. 9th St., at Avenue C (358-0048)—Oct. 30: The five young men in the Nashville up-and-comers the **Old Crow Medicine Show** deliver old-time, pre-bluegrass country music as it's seldom heard. Their heartbreaking, plunky ballads and unfastened fiddle tunes are charged with the youthful vigor of punk rock.

TOBACCO ROAD
355 W. 41st St. (947-1188)—Oct. 29: The **Old Crow Medicine Show** (see 9C). Nov. 2: Austin's **Meat Purveyors** traffic in an irreverent hybrid of bluegrass, folk, rockabilly, and indie rock. They may appear to have their tongues in their collective cheek, but their take on American music is unmistakably heartfelt.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—Nov. 1: Featuring high vocals, solid rhythms, and much repetition, the mostly twenty-something girls in **Palomar** epitomize the revival of the New York sound that everyone's talking about. They are playing with **Eamonn Vitt** and other bands from the Self-Starter label. Nov. 2: The funk rocker **Cody Chesnutt** has the flamboyant stage style (and occasionally foul mouth) of Prince, along with a mastery of acoustic and electronic styles previously demonstrated only by Beck.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through Nov. 16: A superbly swinging singer who could just as easily be knocking them dead at a jazz club, the San Francisco-based **Paula West** brings a gust of vitality and vocal artistry to the cabaret scene. Dining.

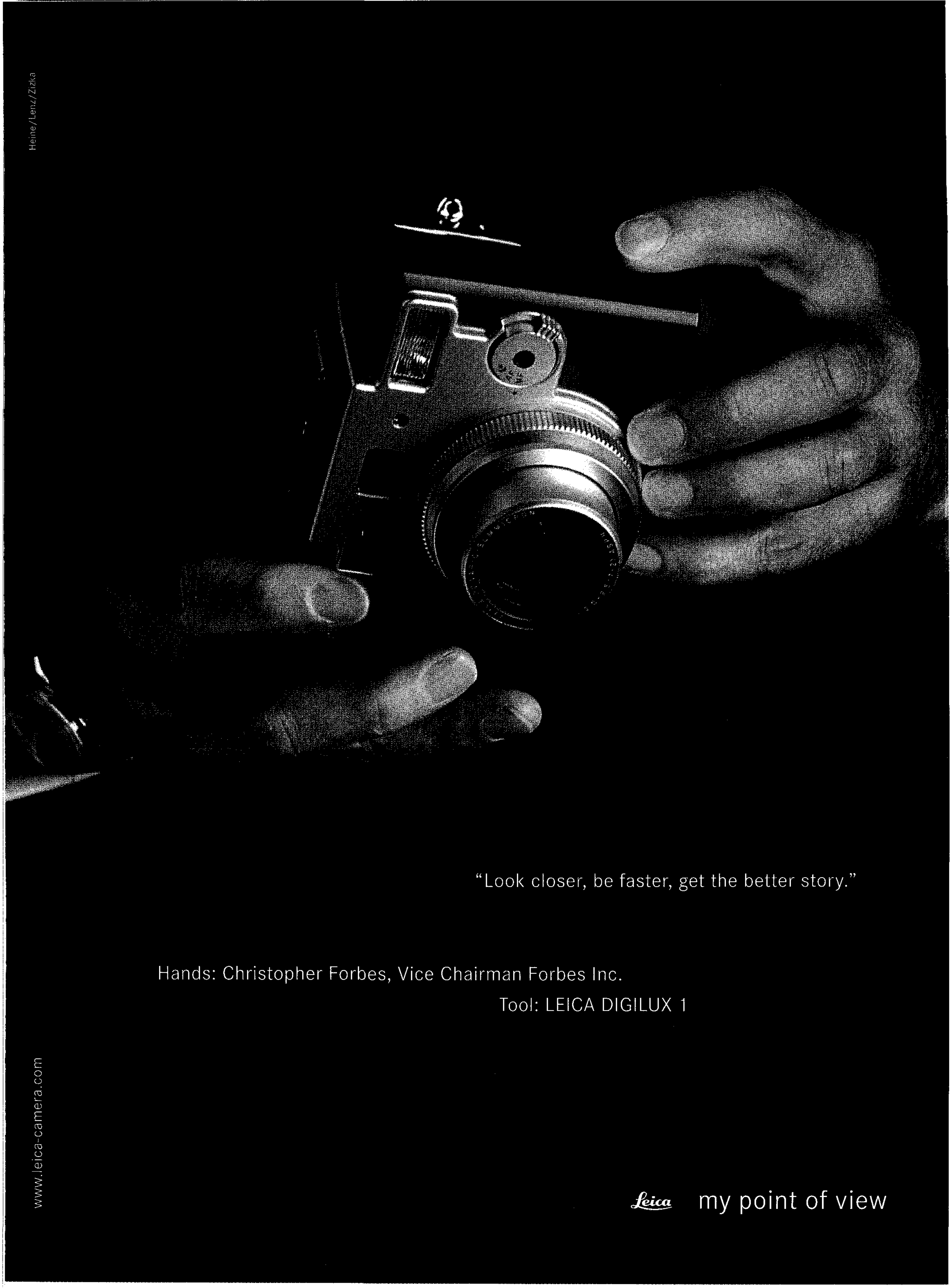
BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Oct. 29-Nov. 3: The jazz harmonica has a single master. Since he came here from Belgium in 1947, **Jean (Toots) Thielemans** has enlivened thousands of recordings of all kinds, from Hollywood soundtracks and pop albums to lauded sessions with the likes of Bill Evans and the great Brazilian diva Ellis Regina. The lyrical improviser celebrates his eightieth birthday with a host of artists including, on opening night, **Billy Joel** (remember "Leave a Tender Moment Alone"?). The saxophonist **Joe Lovano,** the Brazilian musician **Oscar Castro-Neves,** and the pianist **George Shearing,** who was Thielmans's boss back in the fifties, follow.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and the magisterially puckish **Bobby Short.**

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through Nov. 9: **Betty Buckley.** In her new program, the Texas-born former "Cats" star returns to her roots, offering choice Americana from the likes of Jesse Winchester, Janis Ian, Marty Balin, and her guitarist, Stephen Bruton.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through Nov. 3: The **Wallace Roney All-Star Quartet.** A prodigious trumpeter, closely associated with Miles Davis, Roney continues to carve out his own identity. He gets support here from the keyboardist Patrice Rushin and two former Davis sidemen, the bassist **Buster Williams** and the drummer **Lenny White.** Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Nov. 3: **Illinois Jacquet** may no longer be the Texas tornado of legend, the one-man army whose tenor saxo-



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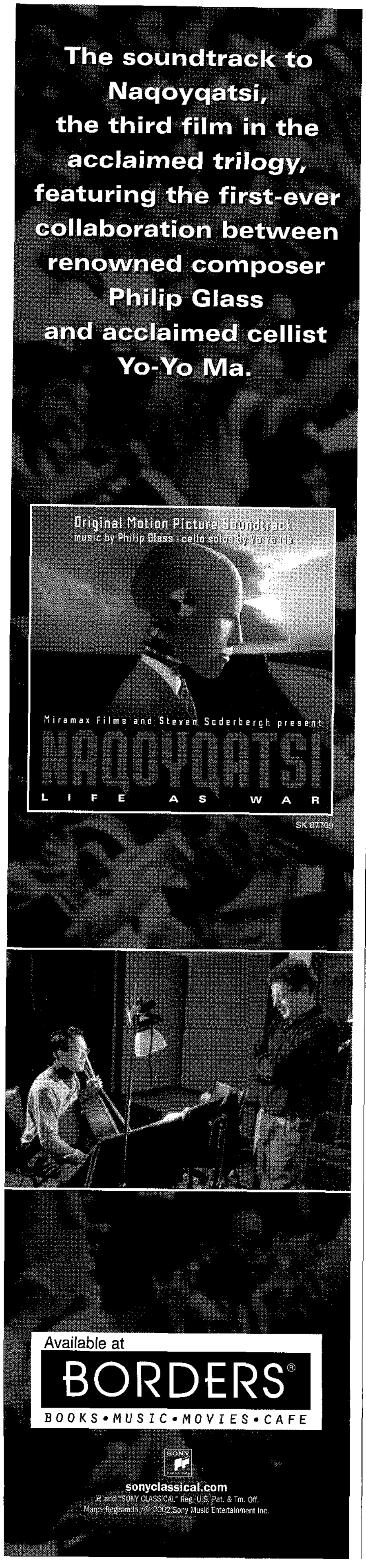
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phone was guaranteed to shake a hall to its rafters, but he's still got the spirit in him. His big band is a light-on-its-feet swing unit that does its leader proud. They'll help him ring in his eightieth birthday in the grand style he deserves. Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Nov. 3: The **Regina Carter** quintet. It's been a while since a new mainstream violinist made a mark on the scene, but Regina Carter is making up for lost time. She's done yeoman's work with Wynton Marsalis, Cassandra Wilson, and (no relation) James Carter, and, although her own quintet may not always coax out the improvisational daring that marks "Free Fall," Carter's 2001 duet album with the pianist Kenny Barron, it's still an invigorating experience to hear her fiddle her way into the night. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

WARWICK HOTEL
65 W. 54th St. (247-2700)—The St. Louis transplant **Linda Presgrave,** a probing, resourceful mainstream pianist with an impressive début album, "In Your Eyes," prowls the bebop landscape for all the stylistic diversity it can offer. She leads a trio on Fridays through November.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—Vija Celmins is well known for her otherworldly paintings and drawings of natural subjects—starry skies, spiderwebs, desert sands—rendered with lapidary precision, but this show marks the first museum retrospective devoted to her prints. Celmins's meticulous hand is ideally suited to printmaking, especially the traditional techniques she favors, such as mezzotint, etching, and wood engraving. All of Celmins's works are based on photographs rather than direct observation, and these monochrome prints, with their lunar black-and-white palette, have a stirring detachment, like thoughts beyond the reach of memory. Through Dec. 29. ♦ Richard Avedon, the only photographer to be played by Fred Astaire in a Hollywood musical ("Funny Face," from 1956), returns to the site of his 1978 retrospective. The hundred and eighty portraits, dating from the forties (an anonymous Sicilian boy in a state of barely suppressed mania) to last year (Harold Bloom with his eyes closed, radiating lassitude), make up a sort of idiosyncratic American *Who's Who.* Poets, painters, drifters, and politicos stand simply and stare into the lens. With Avedon's blank white background behind them, there's nowhere to hide, and the result is an intimacy that's both confrontational and preternaturally delicate. Backlight creeps around the edges of heads; by contrast, facial features darken, and niches and wrinkles seem triple-etched. Avedon's look is largely a matter of extreme values, but the secret of his superbright whites and velvety blacks is that they reinvent grays—as something rare, fugitive, and cherishable. Through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (708-9480)—**"Drawing Now: Eight Propositions,"** a trailblazing show by curator Laura Hoptman, sets the MOMA seal of approval on twenty-six youngish international artists working in the medium that's been the bedrock of visual art since Lascaux. Hoptman's "propositions" identify current modes of drawing, including illustration, decoration, fashion, architectural and scientific drafting, and comics. The show suggests a forge of styles, in which artists hammer out new links between craft, discipline, and worldly import. Some—John Currin, Elizabeth Peyton, Neo Rauch, Ugo Rondinone—are farther along than others, but nearly all convey the exhilaration of being onto something. For the first time in quite a while at a museum group show, exacting comparison, argument, and judgment seem a matter of course. Don't miss this. Through Jan. 6. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Hollywood disaster flick meets Renaissance fresco (think "The Poseidon Adventure" with art direction by Fra Angelico) in **"Going Forth by Day,"** Bill Viola's visually striking five-channel video piece commissioned by a German bank for the Guggenheim Berlin. In one projection, an eclectic procession traipses through a light-dappled forest (the panoramic image evokes old-fashioned CinemaScope). In an adjacent scene, water gushes from the windows and doors of a pristine building façade. Death and resurrection figure elsewhere in the action, as Viola tackles Big Themes. The work was conceived before the events of September 11th, and the portent of disaster is uncanny, if you can handle the smugly pious tone. Through Jan. 12. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Two independent installations by Lorna Simpson continue her long-standing exploration of race. "Cameos and Appearances" (2002) presents irregular grids of photographs in which oval portraits of two hip-looking African-Americans—a man with stylish glasses and a woman with a delicate nose stud—are interspersed with text citing racial stereotypes from literature and popular culture. The sleek pair could be culled from a Gap ad, but with captions like "Femmes Arabes en Voyage" or "Blacula," their aspect changes subtly. Meanwhile, the video installation "31" tracks a young black woman across thirty-one screens, representing years of her life, perhaps, or days of the month. She brushes her teeth, rides the subway, and goes to work or to the doctor in a visual narrative that owes something to Godard and something to MTV. Through Jan. 26. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Judy Chicago's monumental installation **"The Dinner Party"**—a delta-shaped banquet table for thirty-nine worthies from Primordial Goddess to Georgia O'Keeffe—comes from an era when women were wimmin. When the piece was completed, in 1979 (with the help of more than four hundred needleworkers and ceramicists), the sexual equipment pictured in the banquet plates shocked viewers, who found it either too explicit or too reductive. The work languished in storage. Now part of the museum's permanent collection, it looks wonderful—brilliantly colorful, poignantly bygone, but nevertheless a bona-fide triumph of scale and allegory. Through Feb. 9. ♦ **"Exposed: The Victorian Nude,"** from Tate Britain, is a strong historical show about an era when jumpiness about sex had bizarre effects in art. Literary and classical themes provided the alibis for displaying naked females. Popular guises included Shakespearean fairies, virtuous heroines (Lady Godiva rides again, and again), Roman decadents, and the like. For male nakedness, the excuse was propaganda for robust healthiness. Lust lurked, and smut reigned. A turn toward frankness around the turn of the century—in the gloomy nudes of Walter Sickert and the too little known William Orpen—offers a fresh invention: actual people. Orpen's felicitously titled "The English Nude" (1900), a Rembrandtesque tour de force, presents a regular, interesting woman on a rumpled bed. Its mystery is that of really lived life. Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

DIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS
548 W. 22nd St. (989-5566)—Rosemarie Trockel is as enigmatic as ever in a show pairing recent video projections and abstract aluminum sculptures. The monoliths are made of movable metal plates (their interlocking patterns recall the artist's knit "paintings" from the eighties), and they double as projection screens. All but one of the videos feature a fetching young blonde named Manu in exploits ranging from pregnancy (her swollen belly turns out to be a balloon) to death (a slapstick collapse into an open grave). In one noteworthy scenario, Trockel casts Manu as Mother Courage (costume by Courrèges) and makes her look like a variety of famous heroines from Jackie O. to Brigitte Bardot. Through June, 2003. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—**"A Legacy in Landscapes"** begins in 1516, with an engraving of a muscular Venus removing a thorn from her foot, and ends in 2001, with a grid of soft-ground etchings whose butte and mountain shapes were pressed into the printing surface with chunks of Styrofoam. The all-star collection includes examples from Fragonard, Friedrich, and Delacroix to Pissarro, Ensor, and Munch, with contemporary perspectives presented by Alex Katz, Franz Gertsch, Ed Ruscha, and Roxy Paine, among others. The most beautiful, though, are a suite of etchings by William Delamotte (1775-1863), an English pioneer of plein-air rendering who travelled the countryside making detailed portraits of famous trees. Through Jan. 4. (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

MARIA ELENA GONZALEZ
Electrical towers and, by association, power, hazard, and vulnerability are the subjects of this spare and elegant installation. Fourteen small works on paper look like drawings but are in fact digitally manipulated photographs. The images, portrayed in negative as ghostly white forms floating on black backgrounds, hang in a row, like birds on a wire. In the center of the room, a miniature glass tower rests on a plywood pedestal across from a filigreed "drawing" made from the artist's fingernail clippings laid out on black cloth. Through Nov. 3. (The Project, 427 W. 126th St. 662-8610.)

JUAN MUÑOZ
The Public Art Fund often installs a sculpture just outside the Scholar's Gate, at the southeast corner of Central Park. The current leaseholder is "Conversation Piece," a quintet of bronze figures by the Spanish artist Juan Muñoz (1953-2001), occupying a sliver of space between the carriage drivers, the pretzel venders, and the park-bench crowd. Muñoz's figures are just smaller than human scale. Their hands are gloved and their eyes pinched shut, but they grasp at each other and incline their heads as if desperate to communicate. Their eloquent poses feel like gestures in commedia dell'arte—both broadly comical and terribly sad. Through March, 2003. (Fifth Ave. at 59th St.)

Short List

MARKUS LÜPERTZ
Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.
Through Nov. 16.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

PETER CAIN
Cain, who died in 1997 at the age of thirty-seven, hatched a dissonant style—call it photo-surrealism—that is growing in retrospective prestige. A crisp show celebrates his paintings of mutant cars: gleaming sedans reduced to a pod of their front and back ends, set on a single wheel; a head-on S.U.V. squeezed into telephone-booth proportions; and coupes elongated like exactingly pulled taffy. Many of the images are set sideways or upside down, further straining their realist manner with assertions of the painter's impunity. Grating at first, Cain's sleek grotesqueries prove unforgettable. His transformation of our definitive machine—making it symbolize indivisible love and hate—takes willing viewers for a fast, rough ride. Through Nov. 23. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.)

R. CRUMB
This show of finished ink drawings for comics by the weird master has the cheesy air of collectibles marketing—but it's great. At a time when drawing is back in fine-art favor (see MOMA QNS), it's useful to recall that Crumb has practiced it brilliantly, with formal bravura and blistering imagination, for nearly half a century. The selection of works highlights his feminine ideal: dainty girlishness above the waist, rolling thunder below. The anti-guru Mr. Natural stars in his own biography, subtitled "From Shack to Chateau." To come across Crumb's roaring stuff in Chelsea stirs pity for the timorous frailties of most other artists. Through Nov. 9. (Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752.)

WALTON FORD
Grand watercolors by the reigning naturalist painter, whose vision of nature is full of emancipated beasts and outré shades of instinctive violence. The paintings often depict first-contact moments and benighted interspecies misunderstandings, carefully balanced between the tragic and comic. Through Nov. 16. (Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 26th St. 563-4474.)

ALEXANDER ROSS
Plasticine, painter Alexander Ross points out, is nothing but an oil-based clay, a thicker, stiffer cousin to oil paint. Ross's oil paintings exploit the resemblance, rendering with hyper-realist exactitude a crew of pinched and nobby green plasticine lumps. The resulting "portraits" certainly suggest life-forms, though they oscillate between organic and alien, from moss or seaweed to pixellated animations. What remains constant is his pleasure in paint's substance, his tireless exploration of fat, fleet, cross-hatched brushstrokes, and his exuberant allegiance to a palette of verdant artificial hues. Through Nov. 16. (Feature, 530 W. 25th St. 675-7772.)

ROBERT RYMAN
The snowman returns in a luxuriant temper, with paintings whose frosty or creamy, brush-whipped whites interact discreetly with undercolors or the hue of raw canvas or linen. As is his wont, Ryman fusses eloquently with relations of paint masses to the shapes of blocky stretchers and, here and there, with how the stretchers are affixed to the wall. Familiarity with his pleasant worries makes one wonder how he could ever have been deemed minimalist. The style of this show is bashful baroque. Through Nov. 9. (PaceWildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 421-3292.)

KARIN SANDER
For Karin Sander's installation, sixty German, Swiss, and Austrian women named Karin Sander contribute one informal portrait photograph. The women, from twenty-four to eighty-nine, appear painting a ceiling, celebrating a wedding, lying in a deck chair. They offer themselves as a very specific kind of Everywoman. Sander the artist, meanwhile, deftly updates the archetype of her artistic forebear, August Sander (1876-1964), whose monumental series "Man in the Twentieth Century" sought to document the faces of common German "types" (workmen, tradesmen, neighbors). The younger Sander's project is something of a one-liner, but when considered in the light of her elder's example, that line grows into a sort of family tree. Through Nov. 9. (D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460.)

"EXTREME EXISTENCE"
Existentialism trumps irony, on the evidence of this eclectic show curated by Klaus Ottmann, the first at the Manhattan outpost of the Pratt Institute. Andrei Roiter invokes Sisyphus in a painting of a solitary man at the bottom of a mound inscribed with the words "pointless optimism criticism for everything existing." In "Losing Ground," a video by Patty Chang, the hero's mythic punishment gets a suburban cast as the artist takes step after shaky step on what looks like lawn but is in fact a waterbed covered with sod. Through Nov. 16. (Pratt, 144 W. 14th St. 647-7778.)

Short List

NINA BOVASSO
Clementine, 526 W. 26th St. 243-5937.
Through Nov. 16.

PAUL FEELEY
Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.
Through Nov. 23.

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MARCIA HAFIF
Marcus Ritter, 453 W. 17th St. 463-7375. Through Nov. 2.

SAM TAYLOR-WOOD
Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through Nov. 2.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

ROSIE LEE TOMPKINS
The centerpiece of this breathtaking show of quilts is an improvisational grid—a sort of quilting bee by way of Coltrane ballads—in a palette of royal purple, summer-squash yellow, and pumpkin orange. In all Tompkins's quilts, the edges form haphazard rather than parallel lines to create passionate geometries that transcend simple definitions of rectangle or square. Writers have compared Tompkins to canonical bigwigs like Mark Rothko, Joan Mitchell, and Alfred Jensen. But for all their affinities with modernist paintings, her quilts have a tactile allure and wobbly ecstasy unmatched by any canvas. Through Dec. 14. (Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441.)

Sylvia Plachy's "Mink Coat, Sicily, 1988," at Bateman.

"ART IN GENERAL ON CANAL"
Art in General has been almost successful in hiding a series of public art projects among the handbags, T-shirts, and cut-rate electronics stores on Canal Street. Andrea Clarke's wind-sock sculptures subtly mark the few areas of green space along the street, and Robyn Love has installed crocheted doilies to pretty up the "No Standing Anytime" traffic signs. Leo Villareal's illuminated sculpture atop Industrial Plastics is composed entirely of materials bought in the Canal emporium, while a collaborative duo, The PARbros, have inserted photographic superheroes into Cortlandt Alley. If the noise of crosstown traffic reminds you of a sleepless night, you can visit Gustavo Artigas's Web site, www.planb.tv/insomnia, and if you're having a wonderful time and wish someone else were here, you can send artist-designed postcards from Pip Day's project, which are sold at various souvenir stalls. (For further information, call 646-336-7230 or visit www.artingeneral.org.)

"BETWEEN WORD AND IMAGE: MODERN IRANIAN VISUAL CULTURE"
The layout is surely intentional: elegant modernist art work fostered by the Shah adorns the upstairs hall, and political posters favoring struggle against his corrupt regime fulminate from the lower level. Photographs of the 1979 revolution form a buffer. For all their dissonance, these competing visions mine the same traditions and techniques. In one placard, the shape of calligraphic swirls determines the placement of fists raised in militant defiance. In a painting upstairs, the same curves merge into a white mass that recalls a teeming anthill, or, just as easily, the nearby aerial photograph of a crowd of turbanned heads reading the Koran. Through Dec. 7. (Grey, 100 Washington Sq. E. 998-6780.)

"TIME IS FREE"
According to this group show, the two faces of leisure time are anxiety and sterility: the setup here suggests, if you can imagine such a thing, a do-it-yourself airport lounge or hotel-chain lobby. Hotel rooms, and the sad affairs that unravel there, are the subjects of Kenny Macleod's dual-screen video "Breaking Up." Manfred Pernice has set up an installation called "Gartenfest" (2001), a bunch of shabby modular furniture more suited to an acting class than a garden party. Jessica Diamond offers a huge mural proclaiming, "I hate business." And that's about as nuanced as it gets. Through Nov. 9. (Apex, 291 Church St. 431-5270.)

Short List

LIZA LOU
Deitch Projects Annex, 18 Wooster St. 343-7300. Through Nov. 30.

GALLERIES–BROOKLYN

DAVID KRAMER
Open Ground, the onetime social club turned Green Party headquarters, is also, for a few weeks, the latest home of Eyewash's now "migratory" gallery. Kramer salutes the previous inhabitants with a home-built bar and a spread of empty beer and liquor bottles on the floor, interspersed with electrical wire and fluorescent light bulbs spelling out "U & Ur Brite Ideas." The funny, self-deprecating stories he has written on a light box might seem equally suited to the old barflies and the new art clique: "I am on the upswing. I am making plans for the future—I am glad I have such a short memory." Through Nov. 17. (Eyewash at Open Ground, 252 Grand St., Williamsburg. 718-387-2714.)

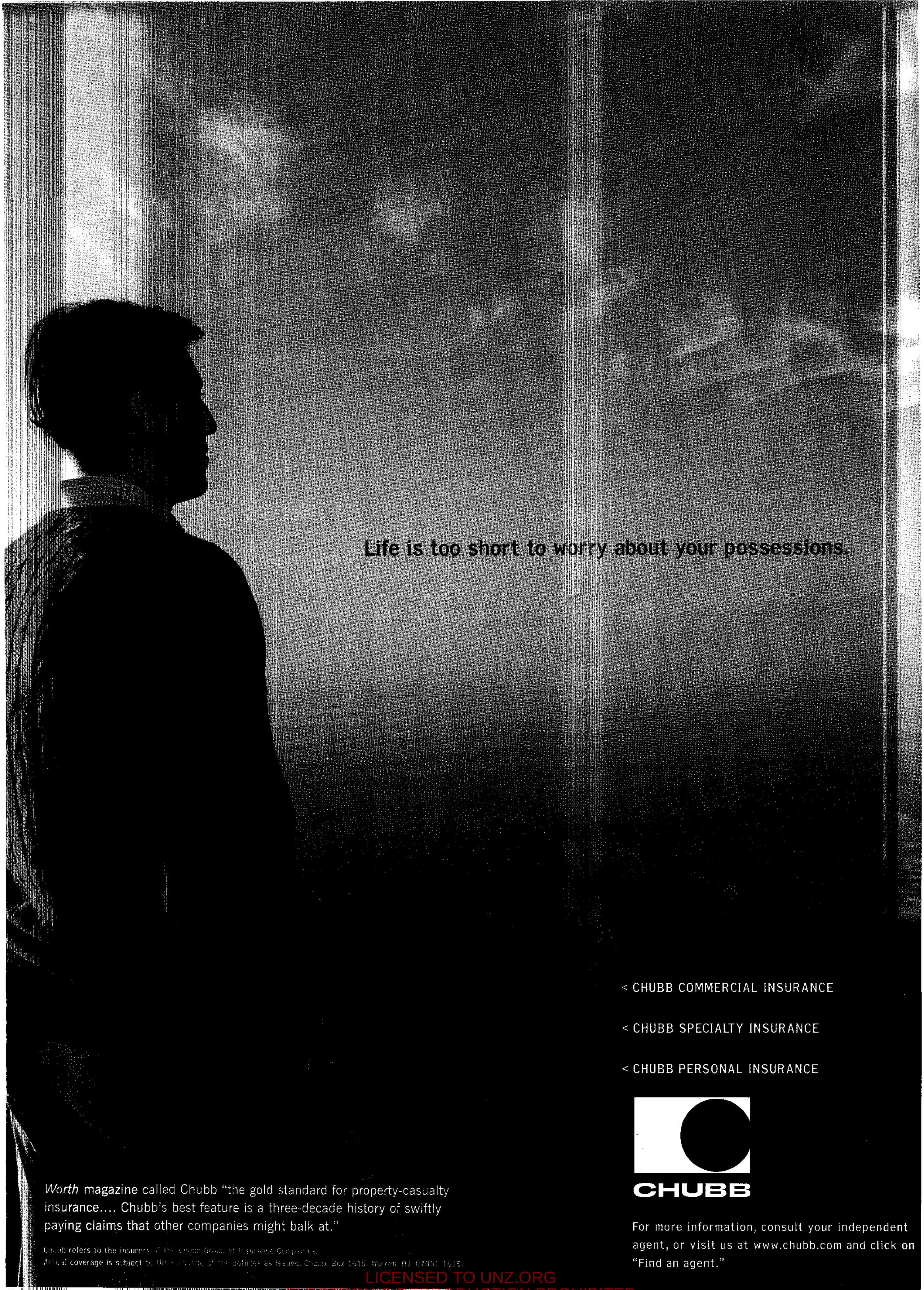
BOB AND ROBERTA SMITH
The Smiths' "Art Amnesty" program calls for every visitor to bring a piece of work and swear it will be their last. Visiting ex-artists make that pledge formal with a card printed "I promise never to make art again (you sign here)" and put their final work in the dumpster outside, or hang it among elaborately lettered signs reading "Max Ernst Lives Like a Pig," and "Donald Judd Tells Lies." And for those who wish to act out their defiance, there are letter stamps, markers, and paper provided. Through Nov. 11. (Pierogi, 177 N. 9th St., Williamsburg. 718-599-2144.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

DAVID HILL AND ROBERT ADAMSON
In 1843, the two Scotsmen began to photograph groups of ministers as a study for a painting to commemorate the founding of the Free Church of Scotland. The painting now hangs in an Edinburgh office, but the prints—mostly salt prints made from calotype paper negatives—are seminal documents of early photography and gorgeous records of mid-nineteenth-century life. There are sweeping landscapes and architectural shots, but the showstoppers here are the portraits. Intimate scenes of huddled ministers are painterly in effect. A beautifully composed portrait of a local fishwife—subtitled "It's no fish ye're buying, it's men's lives"—shows that Hill and Adamson quickly grasped the expressive capacity of the new medium. Through Nov. 15. (Kraus, 25 E. 77th St. 794-2064.)

SYLVIA PLACHY
Plachy, an eccentric star among street photographers, has turned her subjects' backs on viewers this time with a retrospective entitled "Verso." In "Hungarian Wedding, 1964," a bride and groom walk away arm in arm along an ornate courtyard's balcony, trailed at a respectful distance by a foreboding matron dressed in dark clothing. "Penitents, Sicily, 1988" shows a group of men in spooky hoods scurrying toward salvation in a murky church hallway. Don King's famous hair becomes a halo, an explosion, or, at the very least, an event. Through Nov. 30. (Bateman, 560 Broadway. 925-7951.)

"APERTURE AT 50: A CELEBRATION OF PHOTOGRAPHY"
When the first slim issue of *Aperture* surfaced, in 1952, could the founders, Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, and Minor White, have expected a golden-anniversary issue or a series of celebratory exhibitions like these? From Staten Island to the Bronx, Williamsburg to the West Village, the magazine and its supporters will display images created by Robert Capa, William Eggleston, Danny Lyon, Sally Mann, Robert Mapplethorpe, Ray K. Metzker, Duane Michals, Sebastião Salgado, Cindy Sherman, Mary Ellen Mark, Edward Weston, and many others. Venues range from the International Center of Photography and the Aperture Foundation's own Burden Gallery to Barneys, Queens College, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, and the Cub Room. Never been to the Tishman-Speyer Building? It will feature two twelve-foot-long photographs by Doug and Mike Starn, each weighing a hundred and forty pounds. Most shows through Nov. 2. (Check the Aperture Foundation's Web site, www.aperture.org, for locations.)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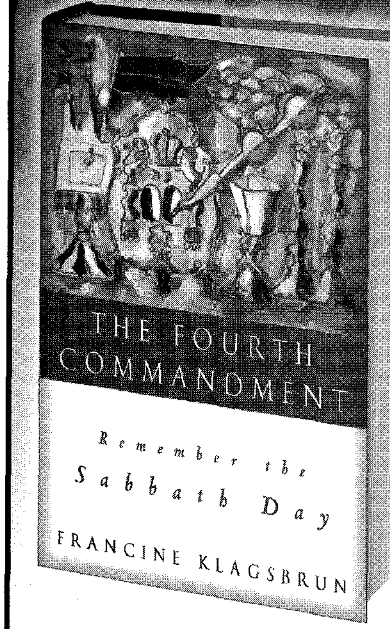

Beautiful and
evocative,
The Fourth Commandment
is nothing short
of a revelation.

Francine Klagsbrun, a columnist for *The Jewish Week* and *Moment* magazine, draws on the Bible, Talmud, and Kabbalah, as well as commentaries and legends, to explore the rich history, true origin, and timeless purpose of this cornerstone of Jewish life.

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"MÜTTER MUSEUM PHOTOGRAPHS"
Shock is the instinctive response to these contemporary and vintage photographs from the Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, but the images of sliced-up faces, gunshot wounds, and fetal skeletons have an almost classical quality. "Cephalothoracopagus," a 1990 Scott Lindgren closeup of the skeleton of conjoined twins fused at the head, drains the monstrousness from the bones. Olivia Parker's "Heart" shows its disembodied subject floating in a glass specimen jar, rendered translucent, its blood vessels injected with vermillion or cinnabar; the image is gorgeous and repulsive at once. Through Nov. 16. (Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 857-0000—"Winogrand 1964." In 1964, Winogrand peeled out of midtown Manhattan and took to the open road, snapping twenty thousand shots in seventeen states over four months. This terrific show of nearly two hundred photographs, selected by the curator Trudy Wilner Stack, puts a fresh spin on summer-vacation pictures, as car windows and windshields frame many of the images. People at airports are frequently depicted, from a covey of nuns sipping coffee in San Francisco to a bikini-clad model being carried onto the tarmac in Lake Tahoe. Through Dec. 1. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

VIRGINIA BEAHAN AND LAURA MC PHEE
Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930.
Through Nov. 2.

DAIDO MORIYAMA
Roth Horowitz, 160A E. 70th St. 717-9067.
Through Nov. 2.

JEFF WALL
Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160.
Through Nov. 20.

"INVISIBLE BEINGS"
De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.
Through Nov. 14.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Oct. 30 at 10:15 A.M.: English furniture, along with books, carpets, and decorative art works, from the estate of Esmond Bradley Martin. A George II white-and-sienna marble chimneypiece, circa 1740, is a highlight of the sale. ♦ Nov. 3 at 2 and Nov. 4 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Furniture from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, along with porcelain, silver, books, and paintings from the Newport and Long Island homes of Mr. and Mrs. James H. Van Alen. ♦ Nov. 5 at 7: Part I of a major sale of Impressionist and modern art, including paintings by such artists as Picasso, Miró, Monet ("Nympheas," from 1906, estimated to bring up to twenty million dollars), and Matisse, along with sculptures by Ernst, Giacometti, and others. Immediately following the sale is a special auction of twelve paintings and drawings from the collection of Bob Guccione. Among the offerings are "Dans la Loge," a Renoir that combines psychological insight with sumptuous brushwork, and the highlight of the sale, "Giovanotto dai Capelli Rossi" (estimated to bring approximately seven million dollars), one of Modigliani's renowned portraits. ♦ Nov. 6 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Part II of the sale, offering paintings and sculpture by Chagall, Morisot, Gauguin, Moore, and many others. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
Oct. 30 at 10 A.M.: Important paintings by Courbet and Cabanel ("The Birth of Venus," one of the iconic images of its time) highlight an auction of nineteenth-century European art, which also includes works by such artists as Corot, Alma-Tadema, and Fortuny y Carbó. ♦ Oct. 30 at 2: Another session of nineteenth-century European art, featuring works by Zabala, Simonetti, Lhermitte, and Fantin-Latour. ♦ Nov. 5 at 10 A.M. and 2 and Nov. 6 at 10 A.M.: A three-part auction of prints from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, featuring works by Matisse, Picasso, Freud, and Johns, along with more than fifty prints by Toulouse-Lautrec (including "La Grande Loge," from 1897, a highlight of the sale). (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

The National Symphony Orchestra performs music by Kaija Saariaho at Carnegie Hall on October 31.

TOMER HANUKA

PHILLIPS
Nov. 4 at 7 and Nov. 5 at 10:30 A.M.: Two sessions of Impressionist and modern art. Picasso's painting "Buste de Femme Souriante," from 1901 (estimated to bring up to seven million dollars), highlights a sale that also includes works by such artists as Monet, Matisse, Kirchner, and Klimt. (3 W. 57th St. 940-1200.)

SWANN
Oct. 31 at 10:30 A.M.: A sale of memorabilia from the world of magic and magicians, including items from the Manny Weltman Houdini collection. An unpublished sixty-three-page manuscript by Houdini on the subject of witchcraft, one of his obsessions, is a highlight of the sale. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
"Carmen," with Wendy Nielsen, Denyce Graves, (in the title role), Richard Leech, and Ludovic Tézier; Yves Abel conducts. (Oct. 30 at 8 and Nov. 2 at 1.) ♦ With Mary Mills replacing Nielsen. (Nov. 5 at 8.) ♦ Franco Zeffirelli's sumptuous, gold-hued production of **"Turandot,"** with Adrienne Dugger (in the title role), Hei-Kyung Hong, Vladimir Galouzine, and Hao Jiang Tian; Carlo Rizzi. (Oct. 31 at 8.) ♦ **"Aida,"** with Michele Crider, Irina Mishura, Richard Margison, Alexandru Agache, and Paata Burchuladze; Marco Armiliato. (Nov. 1 at 8.) ♦ With Dolora Zajick replacing Mishura. (Nov. 4 at 7:30.) ♦ The only good reason to revive **"Il Pirata,"** the potboiler that put Bellini on the bel-canto map, is to provide a showcase for all-out vocal virtuosity. Renée Fleming's Imogene comes up to the mark for her floating pianissimos,

daredevil agility, and physical glamour, but her bright, blooming sound lacks the dark shadows that made the role such a showstopper for Maria Callas. Marcello Giordani, in the title part, cranks out most of the top notes reliably but is less secure elsewhere. Dwayne Croft makes a distinguished enemy in the role of Ernesto, and Bruno Campanella provides sensitive accompaniment in the pit. The production, with tame direction by John Copley and stripped-down scenery by John Conklin, is a triumph for the Met's wardrobe department. (Nov. 2 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
True to its title, Chabrier's opéra bouffe **"L'Étoile"** (directed by Mark Lamos) has become the star of City Opera's adventurous but uneven fall season. The end rhymes of Jeremy Sams's English translation may bring a touch of D'Oyly Carte to the libretto, but there is no masking the Gallic insouciance (both sexual and political) of this rarely performed gem, giddily magnified by Constance Hoffman's costumes, with their bold colors out of Toulouse-Lautrec, and the zany space-age sets and lighting of Andrew Lieberman and Robert Wierzel. Everybody sings and everybody dances, and everybody does it well, especially the versatile baritone Robert Orth, who, complete with padded rump, renders the ridiculous King Ouf as a very fey variation on Mike Myers's Dr. Evil. Also with Lauren Skuce, Jennifer Rivera, and Kevin Burdette; George Manahan conducts. (Oct. 30 at 7:30 and Nov. 2 at 1:30.) ♦ **"The Barber of Seville,"** with Georgia Jarman, Kathryn Cowdrick, Leigh Melrose, and Bruce Sledge; David Agler. (Oct. 31 and Nov. 5 at 7:30 and Nov. 3 at 1:30.) ♦ Renata Scotto's production of **"La Traviata,"** with Pamela Armstrong, Jorge Antonio Pita, and Jason Howard; Steuart Bedford. (Nov. 1 at 8 and Nov. 6 at 7:30.) ♦ The first performance this season of **"Rigoletto,"** with Luz del Alba Rubio, Kirstin Chávez, Raul Hernandez, Louis Otey, and Peter Volpe; Willie Anthony Waters. (Nov. 2 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

AMATO OPERA
The East Village's feisty chamber-opera company presents **"Cavalleria Rusticana"** and **"Pagliacci,"** directed and conducted by Anthony Amato. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Nov. 2 at 7:30 and Nov. 3 at 2:30.)

NEW YORK GILBERT & SULLIVAN PLAYERS
The city's leading Savoy troupe offers a preview of its 2003 season with favorite excerpts from **"The Mikado"** and **"H.M.S. Pinafore,"** along with other delights. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Nov. 3 at 3.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL: "LA PASIÓN SEGÚN SAN MARCOS"
Robert Spano conducts the Brooklyn Philharmonic in the New York première of Osvaldo Golijov's setting of the St. Mark Passion, one of the most acclaimed and controversial works of the new century. Golijov, an Argentine-American Jewish composer, freely mixes the sounds of Latin street music with classical influences to create a grand tableau that is worthy of the tradition of J. S. Bach. Some of the work's original performers—including the bossa-nova singer Luciana Souza and the Schola Cantorum de Caracas—are scheduled to participate, along with Dawn Upshaw, in a star turn. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Oct. 30 and Nov. 1-2 at 7:30.)

NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Leonard Slatkin brings the N.S.O. to Carnegie Hall. Oct. 30 at 8: Weber's "Invitation to the Dance" could serve as a theme for Slatkin's first concert, which also features terpsichorean works by Copland (the "Dance Symphony"), Ravel, and Colin McPhee ("Tabuh-Tabuhan," a pre-minimalist American classic inspired by the music of Bali) and the New York première of Cindy McTee's First Symphony ("Ballet for Orchestra"). ♦ Oct. 31 at 8: The Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho, in her fiftieth year, has a higher profile than ever, thanks to the success of her recent opera "L'Amour de Loin," which has scored triumphs from Salzburg to Santa Fe. Her precise and painterly music may not sound like that of Sibelius, but, like her predecessor, she has learned to handle sensuous instrumental colors and powerful emotions with a terse and wintry restraint. Slatkin conducts the New York première of her "Nymphea Reflection," for strings, in a concert that also includes the Gotham début of a piece by another eminent Finn, Einojuhani Rautavaara (the Clarinet Concerto, with Richard Stoltzman). Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 2, the "Little Russian," completes the program. (247-7800.)

RIVERSIDE SYMPHONY
In joining the centennial celebrations for Stefan Wolpe, the ensemble offers a program that reflects the range of his restless imagination. Two of his works, the Two Studies for Large Orchestra (a world première) and the Passacaglia, will be performed, along with music by Webern (one of Wolpe's teachers), Bartók, and Scriabin (the Piano Concerto, with Ilya Itin). George Rothman conducts. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. Oct. 30 at 8.)

NEW YORK COLLEGIUM
Andrew Parrott opens his inaugural season with the early-music orchestra and chorus with a performance of Handel's oratorio "Israel in Egypt." (Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, 869 Lexington Ave., at 66th St. 717-9246. Nov. 1 at 8.)

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA
Charles Ives's two classic settings of Psalms 67 and 100 anchor a program of new American works (including three world premières) based on psalm texts, by David Lang, Milton Babbitt, Jon Magnussen, Shulamit Ran, and John Harbison. The orchestra is joined by (among others) the singers Amy Burton, Margaret Lattimore, and Richard Clement, along with the New York Virtuoso Singers. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 3 at 3.)

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
Charles Dutoit conducts a program of Sibelius, Ravel (the Concerto in G Major, with Martha Argerich), and Prokofiev. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 5 at 8.)

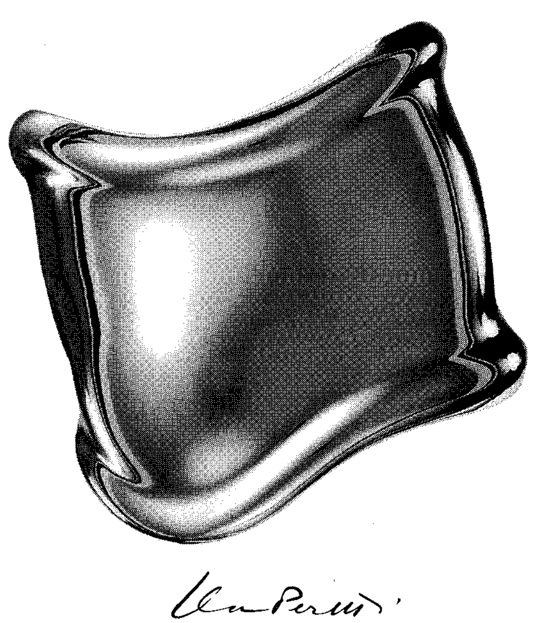
RECITALS

ROCK HOTEL PIANOFEST
Oct. 31 at 7: In addition to being a pianist of international stature, Alexander Toradze holds a teaching post at Indiana University's South Bend branch, where he maintains the Toradze Piano Studio, a hatchery for young artists trained in the bravura Slavic style. In the highlight of their latest concert, the Master will play *primo* in the three-piano arrangement of Scriabin's "Prometheus" Symphony; his crew fills out the marathon program with performances of all the Scriabin sonatas. ♦ Nov. 2 at 8: Alan Feinberg, spiking a program of Chopin, Schumann, and Bach with a dose of Ives, shares a concert with the Czech pianist Lukas Vondracek, a fifteen-year-old boy wonder who offers music of his own country by Janáček ("In the Mists") and Smetana, along with Debussy's "Pour le Piano." (Society Hall, Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. 307-4100.)

BARGEMUSIC
Oct. 31 and Nov. 1 at 7:30: An all-Mozart program (featuring the Duos for Violin and Viola and the Divertimento for String Trio), performed by the violinist Mark Peskanov, the violist Toby Hoffman, and the cellist Wendy Warner. ♦ Nov. 2 at 7:30 and Nov. 3 at 4: Peskanov, the cellist Joel Noyes, and the pianist Paul Ostrovsky perform Schubert's Piano Trios in B-Flat and E-Flat Major. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

KREMERATA MUSICA
The violinist Gidon Kremer and several young colleagues from his chamber orchestra, Kremerata Baltica, play music by Golijov, Morricone, Berio (excerpts from his Thirty-four Duos for Two Violins), Gubaidulina, and Enescu. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Oct. 31 at 8.)

ETHEL
It would be easy to think of Ethel, the reigning downtown string quartet, as New York's answer to



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San Francisco's Kronos—but that wouldn't take into account Ethel's richer texture, infectious enthusiasm, and superior technique. Its members take up residence at the Kitchen for a series of three programs highlighting music by Ingram Marshall, Phil Kline, Todd Reynolds (the group's first violinist), Jason Robert Brown, and many others. (512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Oct. 31 and Nov. 1-2 at 8.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
The King's Singers—in the tradition of the choral scholars of Cambridge University, where the group was founded—like to sing close harmony when they're not polishing their vocal chords on Berio or Byrd. In "Night and Day," a program performed in collaboration with the pianist Emanuel Ax, they sing German part-songs from the Romantic era, along with vocal numbers by Gershwin, Ellington, and Porter sung in the style of the Comedian Harmonists; Ax, not to be outdone, adds some solo repertoire from the pens of Bach, Schubert, and Brahms. (Nov. 1 at 8.) ♦ In this, the first of three concerts, the Orion String Quartet celebrates its fifteenth anniversary, playing a program of Mozart, Respighi, Beethoven, and Ravel with the clarinettist Richard Stoltzman, the mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer, and the dancer Bill T. Jones as special guests. (Nov. 3 at 5.) (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5788.)

THE STRING QUARTETS OF ELLIOTT CARTER
Carter, America's greatest composer of chamber music, has written five supremely complicated string quartets that are comparable in quality to the cycles of Bartók and Beethoven. The young musicians of the Pacifica Quartet—winners of the 1998 Naumburg Chamber Music Award—will attempt the considerable feat of playing all of them in one concert at Miller Theatre, before taking their act on the road. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Nov. 2 at 8.)

MUSIC AT THE 92ND STREET Y
Nov. 2 at 8: The Mendelssohn String Quartet performs two Beethoven quartets, interspersed with readings from Shakespeare and Huxley given by the actress Rosemary Harris. ♦ Nov. 3 at 3: More Beethoven (including the "Appassionata" and the Diabelli Variations), performed by the pianist and scholar Charles Rosen. A brunchtime lecture precedes the concert, at 11 A.M. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500.)

PIETER WISPELWEY
The Dutch cellist, best known, perhaps, for his historically informed work in Baroque repertory, plays a program of Schumann, Chopin, Shostakovich (the Sonata in D Minor), and Prokofiev. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Nov. 3 at 5.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

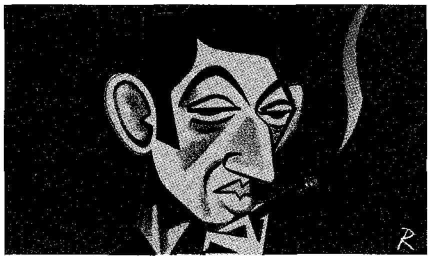
READINGS
Oct. 30 at 7:30: The poet Nick Flynn reads from his sophomore effort, "Blind Huber." (Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 5 Union Sq. W., 7th floor. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Oct. 30 at 7:30: Robin D. G. Kelley, a history professor at New York University and the author of "Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!" and "Race Rebels," offers passages from his latest work, "Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination." (Brecht Forum, 122 W. 27th St., 10th floor. 242-4201.) ♦ Oct. 30 at 8: The poets Jessica Hagedorn and Quincy Troupe read from their work. (The Poetry Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.)

TALKS
Oct. 29 at 6: Milton Esterow, the editor and publisher of *ARTnews*, shares his views on the art world. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 229-5488.) ♦ Oct. 29 at 8:15: The ABC news correspondent Robert Krulwich interviews the paleontologist Michael Novacek. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500.) ♦ Oct 30 at 6: Sarah Billinghurst, an assistant manager of the Metropolitan Opera, talks with the director Robert Wilson about his contribution to the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival. (30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Over There

Eleven years ago, when Serge Gainsbourg, the Gitane-puffing demigod of French pop, died, France came to a virtual standstill, and President François Mitterand publicly eulogized the singer, songwriter, and film star as "our Baudelaire, our Apollinaire." Hyperbole, perhaps, but, as Sylvie Simmons's biography makes clear, there was little about the aggressively louche provocateur—born Lucien Ginsburg—that wasn't hyperbolic. In the breezy **SERGE GAINSBOURG: A FISTFUL OF GITANES** (Da Capo), Simmons, a veteran British music writer, offers, at last, an English-language glimpse of the best of Serge: his boyhood escape from the Nazis; his understandable affection for tooling around Paris in a Triumph Spitfire with Brigitte Bardot; his porn-watching sessions with Salvador Dali; and his work itself, including the notorious "Je T'Aime, Moi Non Plus," a sweet, hymnlike ballad that featured Gainsbourg and his lover Jane Birkin in stereophonic flagrante delicto.


ROBERT RISKO

In the past decade, Gainsbourg's international standing has been enhanced by tributes from such indie-rock heroes as Sonic Youth, Luscious Jackson, and Luna. Likewise, the Brazilian singer Caetano Veloso has been embraced by a new generation of English-speaking aficionados looking abroad for new sounds. In **TROPICAL TRUTH: A STORY OF MUSIC AND REVOLUTION IN BRAZIL** (Knopf), translated from the Portuguese by Isabel de Sena, the erudite Veloso, championed by Beck and David Byrne, tells of the late-sixties rise of *tropicalismo*, an invigorating Brazilian pop music that combined bossa nova with everything from Ray Charles to Carnaby Street psychedelia. Veloso's memoir, like the mutant, border-crossing genre he helped to create, celebrates what he calls a "joyous participation in a universal and international urban cultural reality."

—*Mark Rozzo*

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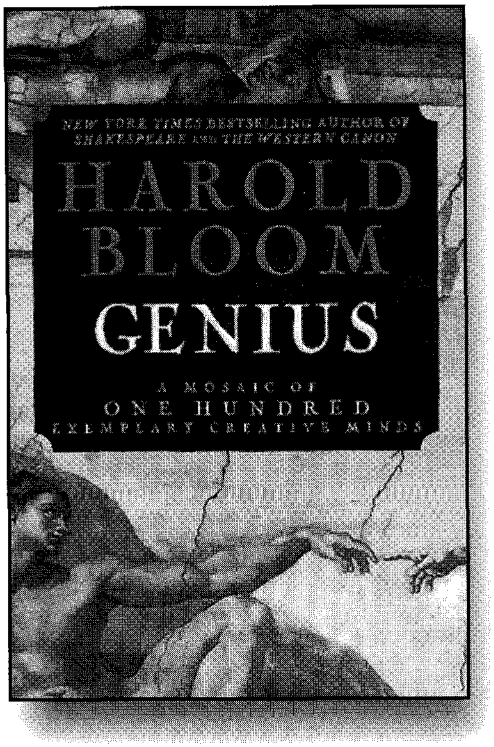
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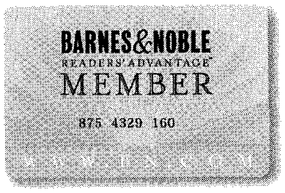
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MOVIES OPENING

BESOTTED
Holly Angell Hardman wrote and directed this romantic comedy, in which she plays a modern-day witch living in a New England fishing village. Opening Nov. 1. (Village East Cinemas.)

DAUGHTER FROM DANANG
A documentary about a young woman who was airlifted out of Vietnam in 1975 as a baby and returned many years later in search of her mother. Gail Dolgin and Vicente Franco directed. Opening Nov. 1. (Quad Cinema.)

I SPY
Owen Wilson and Eddie Murphy star in this action comedy loosely based on the sixties television show. Directed by Betty Thomas. Opening Nov. 1.

LOVE IN THE TIME OF MONEY
A drama set in Manhattan during the late-nineties stock-market boom, structured as a series of encounters with a prostitute. The ensemble cast includes Steve Buscemi, Jill Hennessy, and Michael Imperioli. Written and directed by Peter Mattei. Opening Nov. 1. (Cinema 1 and Quad Cinemas.)

THE SANTA CLAUSE 2
Tim Allen returns as Father Christmas in a sequel to the 1994 comedy. Opening Nov. 1.

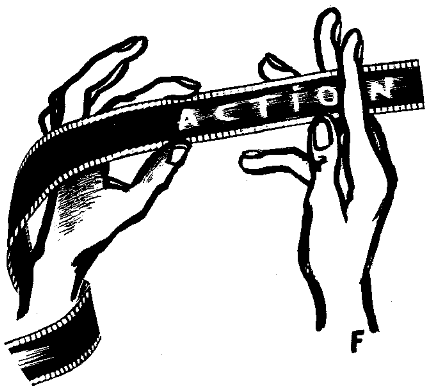
TULLY
A coming-of-age drama set on a Nebraskan farm. With Anson Mount, Julianne Nicholson, and Glenn Fitzgerald. Written and directed by Hilary Birmingham. Opening Nov. 1.

THE WEIGHT OF WATER
Kathryn Bigelow's thriller tells the story of a journalist (Catherine McCormack) researching a nineteenth-century murder in the Isles of Shoals, in New Hampshire. The cast includes Sarah Polley, Elizabeth Hurley, and Sean Penn. Opening Nov. 1. (Village East Cinemas.)

FILM NOTES

AUTO FOCUS
Grim. In the late sixties, Bob Crane (Greg Kinnear), the real-life star of the TV series "Hogan's Heroes," links up with a video-technology salesman and hanger-on named John Carpenter (Willem Dafoe). In effect, the two men pimp for each other: Crane, the TV star with the devilish smile, attracts endless girls, some of whom sleep with Carpenter, and Carpenter, taping the proceedings, attracts a few girls with the cameras, too. The men, scoring night after night, engage in what you might call Old Sex—breast-fixated, impersonal, and brief. The director, Paul Schrader, doesn't try to turn us on; the movie is completely lacking in sensuality. Working from a script by Michael Gerbosi, Schrader jumps through vignettes of mirthless fun and bland debauchery. Despite their extraordinary intimacy, the men loathe each other—there's nothing holding them together but queasy, unfulfilled homoerotic feelings. Kinnear is good as the smug, shallow Crane, but Dafoe is so creepy that it's hard to imagine anyone speaking, much less sleeping, with him. Rita Wilson and the talented Maria Bello play Crane's wives.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 10/28/02.) (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

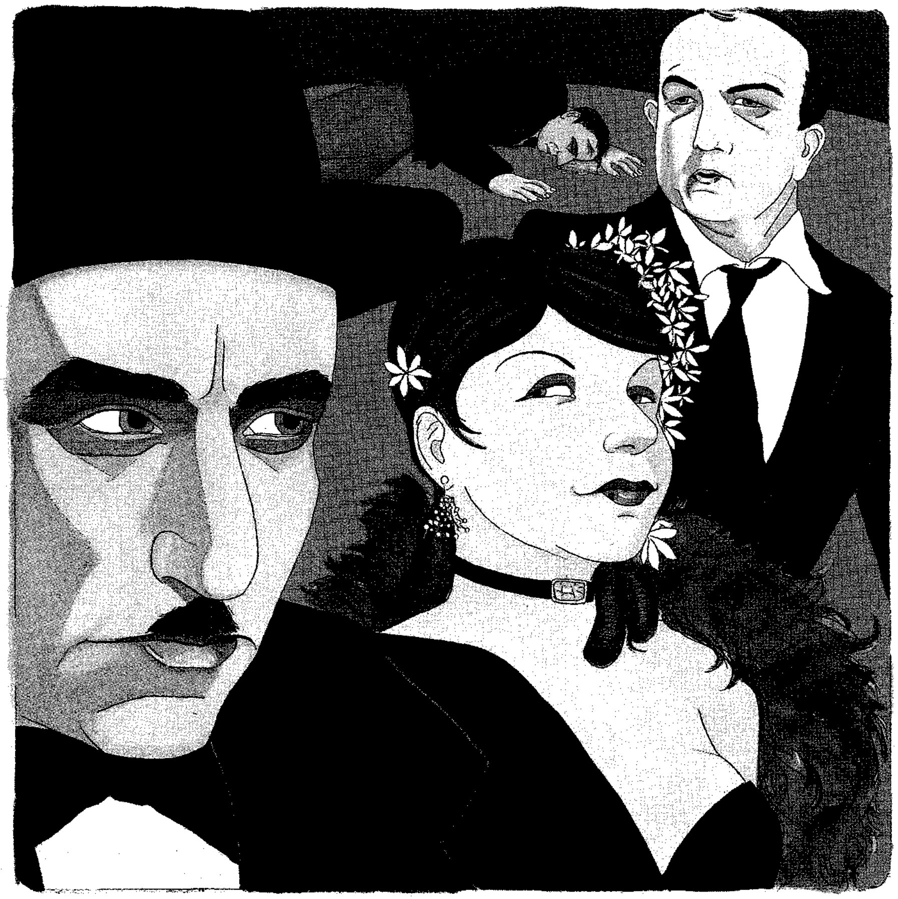
BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE
Michael Moore's rounded guzzler's belly hangs over his jeans, his shirt is untucked and probably untuckable, and his baseball cap covers a mass of unhealthy hair. He's an American satirist disguised as a loser. In his latest provocation—a documentary mixing stock footage, interviews, gun-dealer advertisements, and the like—he goes after America's gun culture, which he sees as the product of a collective guilt over slavery and the slaughter of Native Americans, a guilt that manifests itself in paranoia and a relentless obsession with security. Moore, as always, is less a reliable or coherent thinker than a left-wing joker with a camera, but some of his mocking sallies have a way of hitting their target.—*D.D.* (10/28/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)



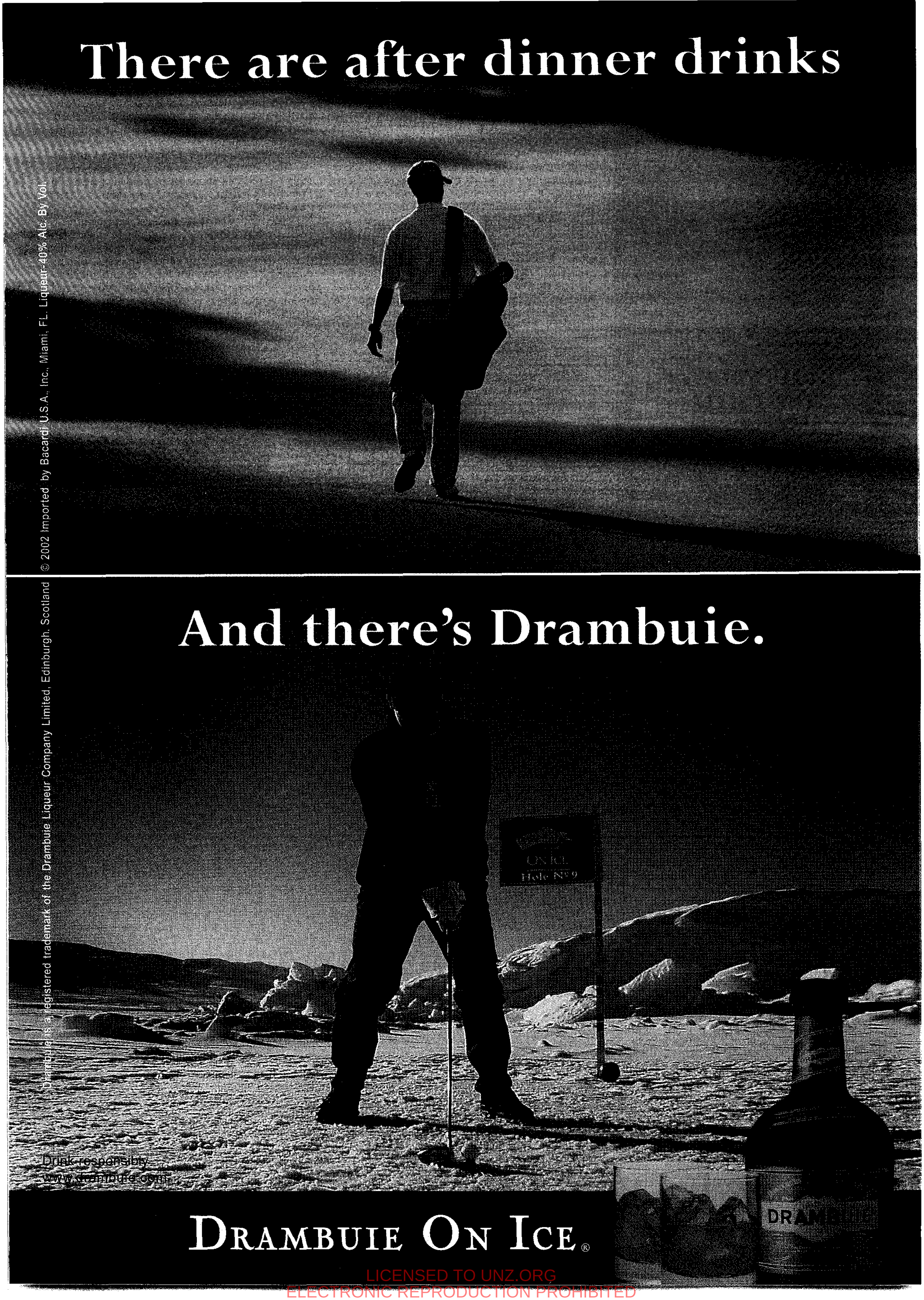
8 WOMEN
François Ozon's new picture is a tonic of sorts, a hot-hued, postmodern murder-mystery musical hen party. The setting is virginal and unashamedly fake—a snowbound house interrupted by the arrival of a horde of famous French actresses. The wisest way to list them without giving offense is alphabetically: Fanny Ardant, Emmanuelle Béart, Danielle Darrieux, Catherine Deneuve, Isabelle Huppert, Virginie Ledoyen, Firmine Richard, and Ludivine Sagnier. For sheer fetishistic whoopee, there is very little to rival the sight of Deneuve and Ardant getting into a catfight, all hisses and claws, and then sinking to the floor to stroke each other's whiskers. Ozon plainly worships the idea of the grande dame, and the movie allows him to both honor and deride his own devotion. There's lots of dancing, a striptease, and a surfeit of arch self-consciousness. Yet something of substance does creep through this concoction. In the competitive jostling of the women, we sense the eternal face-off of beauty against the beast of time. Nobody is more touching in this regard than Darrieux, her soft wrinkles unable to erode the exquisite heroines she once incarnated for Max Ophuls. In French.—*Anthony Lane* (9/16/02) (Kew Gardens Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

HEAVEN
The opening sequence, in which Cate Blanchett deposits a bomb in an office building, is a self-contained masterpiece of editing, and the rest of the movie works well—within its own preposterous logic. Tom Tykwer has a roving, fluid camera, and the buildings and streets of Turin seem depopulated and spare, suggesting that we've landed in the middle of a fable. (That's perhaps the best way to describe the script, written by the late Krzysztof Kieslowski, which tells of a place where true love gets communicated through a single hand clasp, and a prisoner and a sympathetic cop can flee police headquarters by hiding in the attic.) What keeps the movie grounded is Blanchett's expressive performance, and the fearful symmetry of her face, all the more stark when she shaves her head. Giovanni Ribisi plays the policeman who aids her escape, and together the two develop a murky chemistry out of the script's simple, sometimes cryptic dialogue. This is the first installment of what Kieslowski, who died in 1996, planned as a trilogy. The ending offers one of the great existential escapes, via helicopter—just don't ask too many questions.—*Michael Agger* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

MADAME DUBARRY
Today this silent spectacle from 1919 is little seen, but Ernst Lubitsch's exuberant, turbulent French court epic about Louis XV's lover—and her fate when the aristocracy falls—was a sensation both in Berlin and New York. It established the young director as a master craftsman with a warm, generous kind of knowingness and a fondness for dark-haired beauties with dramatic eyes and rosebud mouths. Pola Negri's Madame DuBarry is an ideal Lubitsch antiheroine: a working-class scram-



At Film Forum, Henri-Georges Clouzot's "Quai des Orfèvres."



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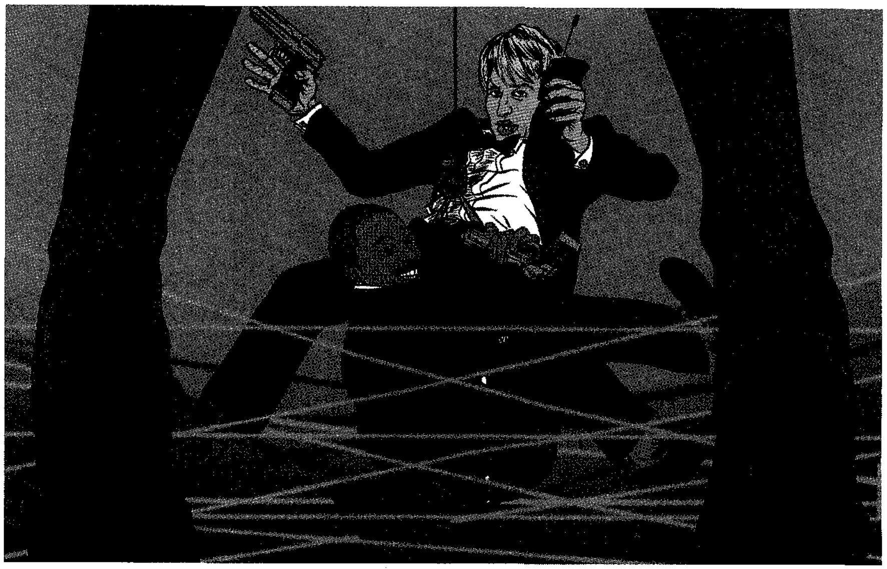
bler and outsider who learns that in Paris you do as the Parisians do. Even when Emil Jannings's overbearingly sensual Louis XV kisses her toes and clips her fingernails, she remains, to her peril, a happy, amoral girl playing sexual hopscotch. At the height of her success, she may grow capricious and put on airs, but until the closing shots she never loses her bond with the audience. Only the guillotine severs that connection, in the climactic sequence notable for its mingling of excitement, compassion, and precision.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; Nov. 2.)

THE MAGIC FLUTE

Ingmar Bergman said that making this 1975 film "was the best time of my life: you can't imagine what it is like to have Mozart's music in the studio every day." Actually, watching the movie, one can. He has treated Mozart's peerlessly silly masterpiece with elegance and supreme affection. He emphasizes the theatricality of the piece, using space as stage space but with the camera coming in close. We get the pixillated feeling that we're near enough to touch the person who is singing; we might be dreamers sailing invisibly among the guests at a cloud-borne party. The English translation of Bergman's adaptation (he clarifies the text) has considerable grace, and the titles are unusually well placed in the frame; the story comes across even more directly than when you hear the opera sung in English. Cinematography by Sven Nykvist. In Swedish.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of Modern Art; Nov. 4.)



Owen Wilson and Eddie Murphy in "I Spy," opening November 1.

NATHAN FOX

NAQOYQATSI

Depressing, but that may be the point. This is the third film in Godfrey Reggio's *qatsi* series, a trilogy designed to remove the oblivious shine from modern life. Like the others, it's a series of short clips and images set to a score by Philip Glass. There's no narration—Reggio believes that "the language of the moment is the image," and the title translates from the Hopi as "a life of killing each other." The subject is not so much war as what might be called the hippie matrix—a world view that sees man as dominated by corporations, industry, and technology. Reggio has a particular talent for collecting footage from the visual fringe, such as industrial videos and MRI scans, and then distorting them in ways that makes them beautiful and ominous. The movie works best at its less didactic moments; it's not the A-bomb cloud that will haunt your dreams but the crash-test dummies in a bucking airplane, moving in slow motion with near-human grace.—*M.A.* (Angelika Film Center.)

ON GUARD

A rousing swashbuckler from the French director Philippe de Broca, who, nearing seventy, seems to have maintained his frothy spirit. The story, a complicated tale of court intrigue in the eighteenth century—with its lisping villain, stouthearted hero, and bosomy love interests—has a familiar warmth. Vincent Perez stars as a slash-happy duke who teaches his protégé, a gleefully parrying Daniel Auteuil, the fine art of swordsmanship. The fencing scenes are thrilling open-air romps, and the twisty, revenge-filled scenario is nimbly plotted and involving. De Broca's effects-free production is thrillingly old school—it carries the audience away. In French and Italian.—*Bruce Diones* (Paris.)

PLAYTIME

Masterly and wearying. Jacques Tati conjures a comic architecture out of everything from Parisian traffic patterns and street lights to space-age airports, showrooms, and office buildings. But he doesn't fill it with anything hilarious until his characters pile into a tony supper club whose grand opening and actual completion are running on slightly different schedules. Film students and directors are the best audience for this 1967 farce—Tati is nonpareil when it comes to using the wide screen for ticklish compositional effects. With Tati as M. Hulot; American dialogue by Art Buchwald. In French, English, and German.—*M.S.* (Museum of Modern Art; Nov. 3.)

PUNCH-DRUNK LOVE

Paul Thomas Anderson's whimsical romantic comedy is a bit like an amusement-park ride that builds tremendous forward momentum and then suddenly juts to the side. Even those of us who enjoy perversity in movies may be put off by its skittering, against-the-beat rhythms. Adam Sandler plays Barry Egan, a frightened fellow in a bright-blue suit, a nerd who sells merchandise out of a San Fernando Valley warehouse and stammers his way through the simplest encounters. At dawn, a harmonium is dropped from a truck outside the warehouse; a bit later, a lovely woman (Emily Watson) inexplicably falls in love with Barry as the music track offers drumbeats in arbitrary counterpoint to the imagery—in fact, everything that happens is arbitrary, and the characters are mysterious without becoming interesting. At times, Barry explodes with rage, slamming his fists into the walls. Anderson wants to say something quirky and powerful about love and the miraculousness of ordinary lives, but his world neither intersects with ours at any point nor hangs together as an independent magical creation. There are touches out of Harold Lloyd's and Jacques Tati's comedies and old Hollywood musicals, but just touches.—*D.D.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.)

QUAI DES ORFÈVRES

A stunningly well-made entertainment, this 1947 detective film by Henri-Georges Clouzot features the master actor Louis Jouvet in the role of a police inspector. His world is contrasted with that of the music hall, represented by the full-blown, hypersexual Suzy Delair. When this voluptuous slut sings "Avec Son Tra-la-la," she may make you wonder if the higher things in life are worth the trouble. With Bernard Blier as Delair's worshipful-masochist husband, Charles Dullin in the role of a lecherous hunchback, and, as a lesbian photographer, Simone Renant, at the time said to be the most beautiful actress in Paris. The film took the top prize at Venice, but in this country it never got the audience it deserved. In French.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; starting Oct. 25.)

RED DRAGON

A fourth helping of Hannibal Lecter, the third featuring Anthony Hopkins, and, with any luck, the last for a while. When a character becomes a franchise, there is only so much repetition that he—or she—can take before sliding into parody, and there is something distasteful in the thought that we are being urged to treat a homicidal maniac as a lovable rogue. The film presents a more youthful Lecter (although Hopkins cannot camouflage his years) who arrives in jail after spearing a detective called Will Graham (Edward Norton). From his cell, Lecter helps Graham to track the savage Tooth Fairy, whose real name is Dolarhyde (Ralph Fiennes), and whose identity Graham is strangely slow to unveil. In comparison with "The Silence of the Lambs," the new movie lacks mystery and dread, but the screenwriter, Ted Tally—who also scripted "Lambs" but wisely passed on "Hannibal"—lends it shape and thrust. Directed by Brett Ratner, somewhat anonymously. With Emily Watson as a startling and sexy blind woman, and Philip Seymour Hoffman as a journalist whom you can chew.—*A.L.* (10/14 & 21/02) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE RING

Gore Verbinski's film, a retelling of the hit 1998 Japanese thriller, is a cold, arty exercise in scary moviemaking. Naomi Watts, in a strong performance, stars as a newspaper reporter who discovers a videotape that promises death to the viewer a week after it's seen. The movie's nifty beginning—all anxiety and dread—suggests that the audience is in for a fearful ride, but the one-dimensional story quickly runs out of fuel. Verbinski desaturates the film's colors (muddy browns and jaundiced yellows) in a vague attempt at atmosphere. Although he manages to pull off a few spectacular fright moments, the tension never really kicks in.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

ROGER DODGER

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Lincoln Square and Sunshine Cinema.)

SECRETARY

A comic porno-fantasy shot by the director Steven Shainberg in a slow, dreamy, neo-De Palma style with a candy-colored palette. Maggie Gyllenhaal is a masochistic girl who finds happiness working for a creepy lawyer (James Spader) who regularly whacks her on the fanny. Gyllenhaal has a Kewpie-doll silliness that almost makes the naughty parts of the movie fun, but Shainberg takes forever to get the story going and lacks the stylistic panache to pull off his pain-is-liberation premise. The movie is a piece of brazen anti-feminism that says, "If pain is your thing, you go, girl!"—*D.D.* (9/23/02) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.)

SPIRITED AWAY

In his native Japan, the animator-director Hayao Miyazaki is considered a national treasure, and this movie, which he came out of retirement to complete, recently surpassed "Titanic" as that country's highest-grossing picture. It's an amazing work, displaying a visual intelligence that's meticulously composed and obscenely clever. Miyazaki's playful aesthetic is like a Japanese word that can't be adequately translated, best approximated as part Spielberg, part Dr. Seuss. "Mature" American audiences may be put off at first by a film that is essentially a cartoon about a fearful ten-year-old girl. But as the hero, Chihiro, sees her parents turned into swine and flees into an alternate world filled with the creatures of Japanese mythology and of Miyazaki's own invention, any distracting sense of childishness falls away. Left to savor are virtuoso touches, like a flock of birds that become useless paper, a train that glides along the surface of a lake, and one of the great villains of all time, Yubaba, who looks like a bobble-headed grandmother on speed.—*M.A.* (Cinema 2, 42nd Street E Walk, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHARLIE

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Beekman, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

WHITE OLEANDER

Does anyone know what happened to the Michelle Pfeiffer who made "The Fabulous Baker Boys" and "Married to the Mob"? She seems to have disappeared, taking with her a sly sense of fun, leaving the new-model Pfeiffer to concentrate on earnest empowerment studies like "Dangerous Minds," and now this. Peter Kosminsky's film, adapted from the novel by Janet Fitch, stars Pfeiffer as a Los Angeles artist who kills a man and goes to prison, a place she enjoys for its clarity of purpose, and from where she urges her teen-age daughter Astrid (Alison Lohman) to be herself at all costs. In practice, this involves making life hell for any foster parent who has the guts, or the kindness, to take Astrid on. The film is luminous to look at and

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Palio d'Asti - 640 Sacramento Street	(415) 395-9800
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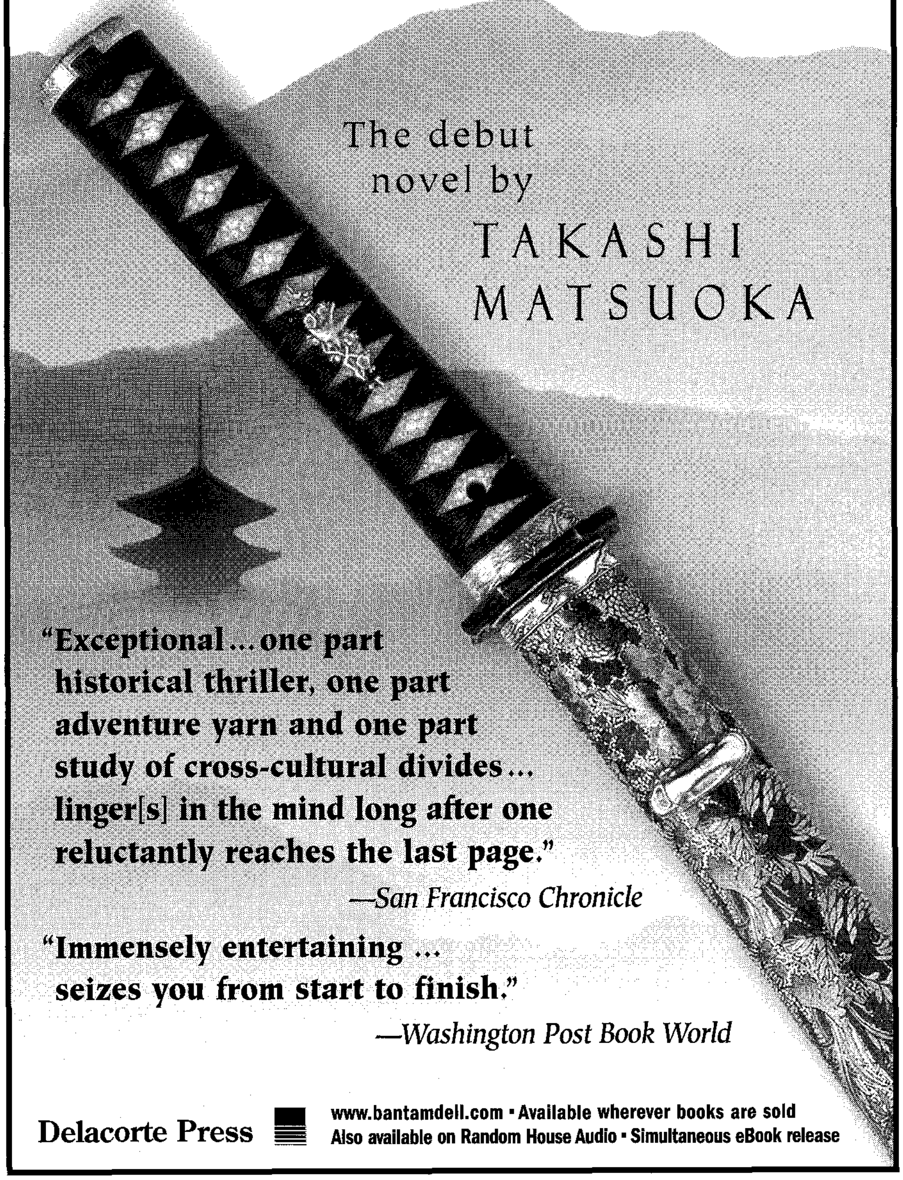

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hard to listen to, as great chunks of whole-meal fiction are read out in voice-over. There are contributions from Robin Wright Penn and Renée Zellweger, but the movie belongs to Lohman, who must be praying that it will lead to roles in which she will be allowed to smile.—*A.L.* (10/14 & 21/02) (Battery Park 16, Cinema 1, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

ALSO PLAYING

ALL OR NOTHING
Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
BLOODY SUNDAY (10/7/02)
Kew Gardens Cinema and Union Square.
FRIDA
Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.
THE GREY ZONE
72nd Street East and Village East Cinemas.
JACKASS: THE MOVIE
Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.
THE MAN FROM ELYSIAN FIELDS
Eastside Playhouse, Empire 25, Kew Gardens Cinema, and Village East Cinemas.
REAL WOMEN HAVE CURVES
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.
THE RULES OF ATTRACTION
Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.
SAFE CONDUCT
Cinema Village.
SWEET HOME ALABAMA (9/30/02)
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.
THE TRIALS OF HENRY KISSINGER (10/7/02)
Film Forum.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9835).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Nov. 2-3: "East European Women: The Films of Judit Elek and Nana Djordjadze." Nov. 2 at 1: "The Lady from Constantinople" (1969, Elek; in Hungarian). ♦ Nov. 2 at 4:30: "Maria's Day" (1983, Elek; in Hungarian). ♦ Nov. 2 at 6:30: "A Free Man: The Life of Erno Fisch" (1998, Elek; in Hungarian). ♦ Nov. 3 at 2: "Robinson Crusoe in Georgia" (1986, Djordjadze; in Georgian). ♦ Nov. 3 at 4: "A Chef in Love" (1996, Djordjadze; in Georgian). ♦ Nov. 3 at 6:30: "27 Missing Kisses" (2000, Djordjadze; in Georgian).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Oct. 30-Nov. 2 at 7:30 and 9:15 and Nov. 3 at 3:45 and 5:30: "Wisconsin Death Trip" (1999, James Marsh).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Kino silents. Oct. 30 at 7:30: "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" (1920, Robert Wiene). ♦ Oct. 31 at 7: A "Cinema Slam." See www.bam.org for details. ♦ Starting Nov. 1: "From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War on Film." Nov. 1 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "China Gate" (1957, Samuel Fuller). ♦ Nov. 2 at 2, 4:30, and 7:30: "Platoon" (1986, Oliver Stone). ♦ Nov. 3 at 2, 5:20, and 8:50: "The Deer Hunter" (1978, Michael Cimino). ♦ Nov. 4 at 6:30 and 9:20: "The Green Berets" (1968, John Wayne). ♦ Nov. 5 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "In the Year of the Pig" (1969, Emil de Antonio).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Oct. 30-Nov. 5 at 1:10, 3:15, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:50: "Quai des Orfèvres" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Through Dec. 17: Neo-noir films. Nov. 5 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Confidentially Yours!" (1983, François Truffaut; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
127 E. 23rd St. (777-4900)—The museum has opened a temporary home for its Film and Media programs in the restored Gramercy Theatre. Oct. 31 at 6:15: John Waters presents his 1988 film, "Hairspray." ♦ Through Nov. 7: "To Save and Project," a celebration of film preservation. Oct. 31 at 4:15: "Gance, Buñuel, and Epstein: Three Surrealist Films" (1915-29). ♦ Nov. 1 at 2: "Anna Boleyn" (1920, Ernst Lubitsch). ♦ Nov. 1 at 4:30: "One Arabian Night" (1920, Lubitsch). ♦ Nov. 1 at 6:30: "The Smiling Lieutenant" (1931, Lubitsch). ♦ Nov. 2 at 1: "Madame Dubarry" (†). ♦ Nov. 2 at 5:15: A program of experimental films (1894-1971). ♦ Nov. 2 at 7:15: "Ace of Hearts" (1921, Wallace Worsley). ♦ Nov. 3 at 8: "Playtime" (†). ♦ Nov. 4 at 5:30: "The Magic Flute" (†). ♦ Nov. 4 at 8:15: "Limelight" (1952, Charles Chaplin). ♦ Through Nov. 21: "Variations on an Enigma," a tribute to the actress Delphine Seyrig. Oct. 31 at 2 and Nov. 1 at 8:45: "Aloïse" (1975, Liliane de Kermadec; in French and German). ♦ Oct. 31 at 8:30: "Daughters of Darkness" (1971, Harry Kümel; in French). ♦ Nov. 2 at 3: "Muriel" (1963, Alain Resnais; in French). ♦ Nov. 2 at 9:15: "The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie" (1972, Luis Buñuel; in French). ♦ Nov. 3 at 3: "Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles" (1975, Chantal Akerman; in French). ♦ Nov. 4 at 2: "Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia" (1988, Ulrike Ottinger; in German).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300)—Through Nov. 5: "Stop, Look & Listen," a festival of films about music, opening with "Standing in the Shadows of Motown" (2002, Paul Justman) and featuring a new print of "Saturday Night Fever" (1977, John Badham). See www.twoboots.com for a complete schedule.

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (358-0573)—Midnight movies. Oct. 30-Nov. 2: "The Silence of the Lambs" (1991, Jonathan Demme).

THALIA THEATRE
2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—Nov. 2-3 at 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10: "Trembling Before G-d" (2001, Sandi Simcha Dubowski).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Oct. 31: "Scary Movies: Thirty Years of Horror." Oct. 30 at 1: "Ring 0: Birthday" (2000, Norio Tsuruta; in Japanese). ♦ Oct. 30 at 3: "Ring" (1998, Hideo Nakata; in Japanese). ♦ Oct. 30 at 5 and 9 and Oct. 31 at 1: "Deathdream" (1972, Bob Clark). ♦ Oct. 30 at 7: "Shock a.k.a. Beyond the Door 2" (1976, Mario Bava). ♦ Oct. 31 at 3 and 7: "The Stone Tape" (1972, Peter Sasdy). ♦ Oct. 31 at 5 and 9: "Death Line" (1972, Gary Sherman). ♦ Starting Nov. 1: "The New Faces of Swedish Cinema." Nov. 1 at 1 and Nov. 2 at 8:30: "The Reunion" (2002, Mans Herngren and Hannes Holm). ♦ Nov. 1 at 3:15 and 9:15 and Nov. 5 at 3:15: "All Hell Let Loose" (2002, Susan Taslimi). ♦ Nov. 2 at 1:30 and Nov. 5 at 8:15: "Days Like This" (2001, Mikael Håfström). ♦ Nov. 2 at 3:45: A program of Swedish short films. ♦ Nov. 2 at 6: "Jalla! Jalla!" (2000, Josef Fares). ♦ Nov. 3 at 1: "Invisible" (2002, Joel Bergvall and Simon Sandquist). ♦ Nov. 3 at 3:15 and Nov. 5 at 1 and 6: "Four Women" (2002, Baker Karim). ♦ Nov. 3 at 6: "The New Country" (2000, Geir Hansteen Jörgensen).

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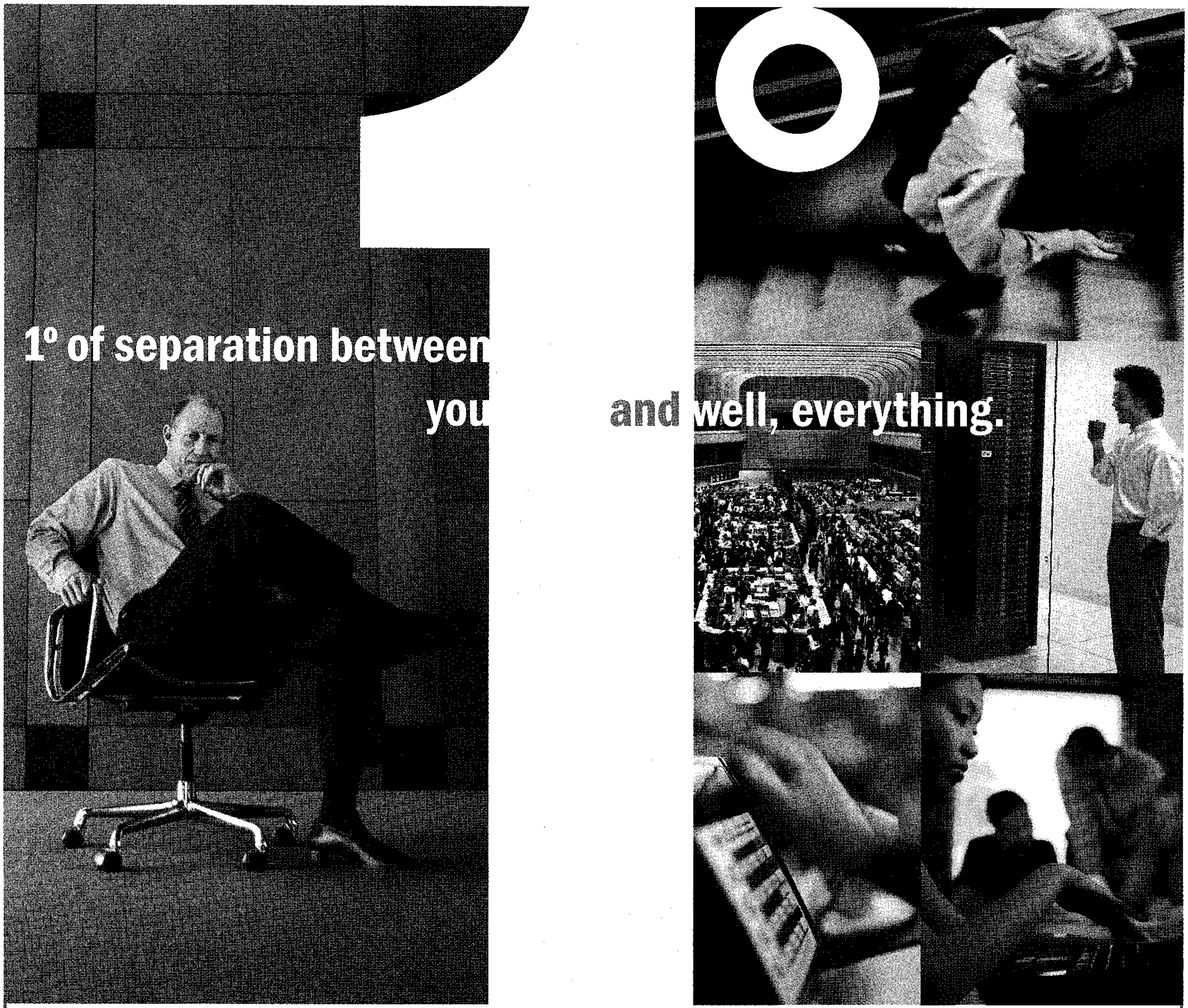

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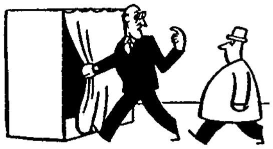
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
2000 AND TWO

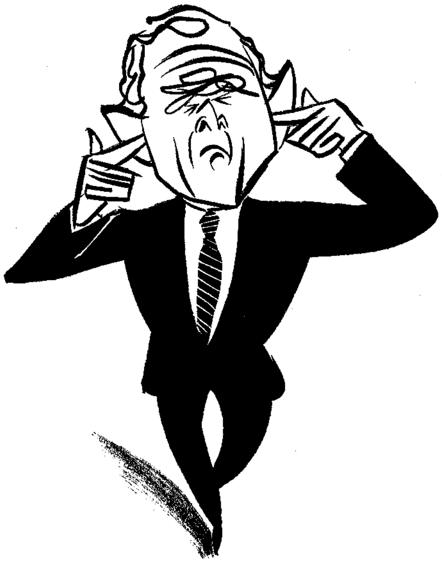


Seven weeks ago, the first anniversary of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks was commemorated with appropriately solemn ceremony. November 7th marks another anniversary, the second, of another American injury.

In terms of national and international upheaval, geopolitical importance, and, above all, human suffering, there is, of course, no comparison between the events of September 11, 2001, and those accompanying the Presidential election of 2000. No evil conspiracy planned the latter; no one died on account of it; no children's dreams are haunted by it. Yet there is no doubt that American democracy suffered a grievous wound. September 11th presented a challenge to America's leaders, and by and large, especially in the early months, they rose to it. The challenge posed by November 7th, however, has never been met.

The most obvious aspect of that challenge is that for the first time since the nineteenth century the United States is governed by a President who, as a candidate, was rejected at the polls. "The Longest Night: Polemics and Perspectives on Election 2000" (California), a just published collection of essays by some two dozen distinguished scholars of law and history, includes several contributions from foreign observers. One of them, Shlomo Avineri, of Jerusalem's Hebrew University, notes sharply, "Certainly there is no other democratic society in which an executive president can be elected if he receives fewer popular votes than his major contender." But, as he points out, this possibility persists for good historical reasons, notably the patchwork way in which modern democratic norms were gradually and informally grafted onto the Constitution's eighteenth-century contrivances. In Avineri's words, "The democratization of the American system happened incrementally, not through revolution or rupture; new wine was poured into old vessels." He adds, "This nonviolent incrementalism is clearly praiseworthy; yet in Florida in 2000 it exacted its price."

It sure did. The victory of a popular-vote loser in the Electoral College, the leakiest old vessel of all, would have created a ticklish dilemma even if it had happened cleanly. It did not happen cleanly. Florida was an unremitting travesty, right down to the awarding of the state and the Presidency to George W. Bush by the five most conservative Justices of the Supreme Court, in a decision so shoddily reasoned and so at odds with their normal jurisprudential inclinations that the only plausible explanation for it is that they were simply imposing their political preference. How one feels about this depends at least partly on one's own political preference. But not even the most complacent Bush supporters could deny that their man was taking office under unusual circumstances.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

The new President's response to all this was to ignore it. He made no attempt to broaden his government or to mitigate its program of putting money in the pockets of the rich, rolling back environmental protections, favoring energy extraction over conservation, and the rest. Bush's intransigence demanded a response, and it must be said that Gore did not provide one.

What might Gore have done? By a plurality of half a million, the voters had expressed a preference for his ideas (though not, one guesses, his personality) over Bush's. If you include the net third-party vote, the plurality becomes a clear center-left majority. Early on—even before the Inauguration, perhaps—Gore could have said, first, that he did not question the legitimacy of Bush's claim to the office and would support him when possible; second, that the national popular vote, while constitutionally irrelevant, was the opposite of a political mandate for wrenching the country to the right; and, third, that he, Gore, believed that the popular vote had imposed upon him an obligation to speak for those whose interests and values would now be shut out of the executive branch of government. Then, perhaps in a series of monthly speeches, he should have spoken out, politely but firmly, on the issues of the moment.

Instead, he fell silent. He did not accept—and apparently did not perceive—the responsibility that his popular-vote victory had laid upon him. The other day, a Fox News poll had twice as many people saying that they would have felt "less safe" with Gore in the White House than they do with Bush. Does this reflect a belief (almost certainly incorrect) that Gore would have been less than vigorous in going after the terrorists? Maybe. But perhaps it also reflects a recognition that at a crucial moment he essentially left voiceless those who had placed their trust in him.

As for Bush, he is now spending the last days before the midterm election campaigning almost continuously to retain his party's control over the House of Representatives, recapture the Senate, and, by extension, consolidate the conservative Supreme Court majority that made him President in the first place. Trent Lott, the Senate Republican leader, explained the other day what would follow. "We will come out of the gate next year fast," he said, and listed these legislative priorities: confirming some fifty conservative nominees to the federal judiciary; expanding tax cuts, which go overwhelmingly to the very rich; enacting a prescription-drug plan that, bypassing Medicare, would require the elderly to buy coverage from private insurers; banning certain late-term abortions; and squelching any strengthening of gun control. This was the Republican agenda before 9/11, and it was unpopular enough that President Bush's approval ratings were steadily sinking. For good reason, it's still not popular. But, thanks to 9/11 and its aftermath, Bush is. And Democrats can be forgiven for feeling a little bitter that the political legitimacy he failed to earn at the polls ended up being conferred on him by Osama bin Laden.

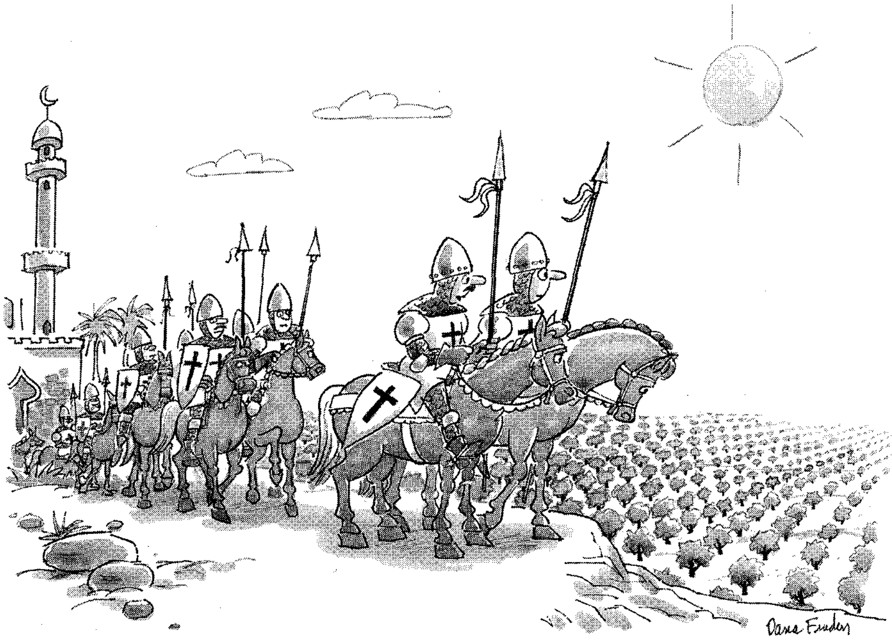
—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

DEPT. OF PADDING
DISHONORABLE DEGREES

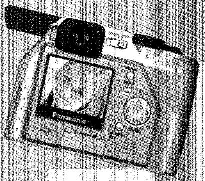
Twice a year, Jude M. Werra, of Jude M. Werra & Associates, a headhunting firm in Brookfield, Wisconsin, reviews the hundreds of résumés he has seen in the previous six months—the elegant, triumphant C.V.s of C.E.O.s and V.P.s—and he condenses them into a single statistic. "It's the number of people who've misrepresented their education divided by the number of people whose education we checked," Werra explained last week: in short, the percentage of people who invented a degree. Werra calls it the Liars Index. The index, which has been published since 1995, was at its highest in the first half of 2000: 23.3 per cent. It now stands at 11.2 per cent.

If there is a case for regarding all résumés as adventures in narrative, it is one that should not be made to Mr. Werra. In his view, a lie is a lie, whether it is propagated by Ronald Zarrella, the chief executive of Bausch & Lomb, who confirmed two weeks ago that he did not, after all, have an M.B.A. from N.Y.U.—or by Quincy Troupe, California's newly appointed poet laureate, who, shortly after Zarrella's announcement, acknowledged that he had never received a degree from Grambling College, in Louisiana, despite making that claim on his résumé. (Mr. Zarrella remains at his desk, backed by the Bausch & Lomb board; Mr. Troupe's resignation has been accepted by the California senate, presumably on the ground that the last thing a state needs is a poet who makes things up.) These embellished résumés, testing our taste for the legend of the self-made man (as well as Sir Philip Sidney's claim that "the poet . . . never lieth"), can now be filed alongside those of Kenneth Lonchar, the former chief financial officer of Veritas Software (who gave himself a Stanford M.B.A.), Sandy Baldwin, the former president of the U.S. Olympic Committee (doctorate in American literature), George O'Leary, the former Notre Dame football coach (master's degree in education), David Geffen, Miss Virginia 1995, and John Holmes, the porn star, who invented a degree in physical therapy from U.C.L.A.

Werra, who has been in the business of "retained executive searches" for twenty-five years, used to interview candidates first and then do a background check. Now he checks first and interviews later, ever since an engaging interviewee said that they had been contemporaries at Marquette University in the mid-nineteen-sixties. The man claimed to remember their graduation ceremony. Werra said, "I was talking about how



"Let's face it. It's all about olive oil."



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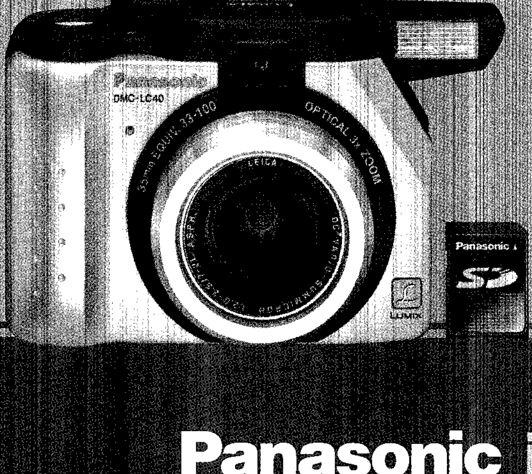
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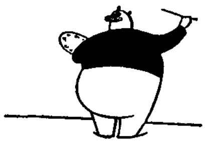
President Johnson's daughter had attended, and about all the security, the metal detectors, and how the place was ringed with police and Secret Service and so on, and he was saying, 'Yeah, yeah, wasn't it amazing?' And he had never been there, of course."

Werra went on, "A few years ago, I spoke with a gentleman who claimed to have a degree from Fairleigh Dickinson. Let's call him John Martin. The university had no record of him, so I dropped him a note: 'Could you clarify this?' He wrote me back six weeks later: 'You know, I've accepted a job to be director of sales and marketing of your client's No. 1 competitor—just wanted to let you know. And, by the way, the reason you couldn't find information on my degree is that my name isn't really Martin, it's Martini, and my father was rubbed out by the Mob in New York years ago, and my mother got us into the witness-protection program, and when I went to Fairleigh Dickinson I got my degree under another name. But I have a special phone number—you can call it and whoever answers the phone will tell you I have a degree.' " Werra did not make that call.

—*Ian Parker*

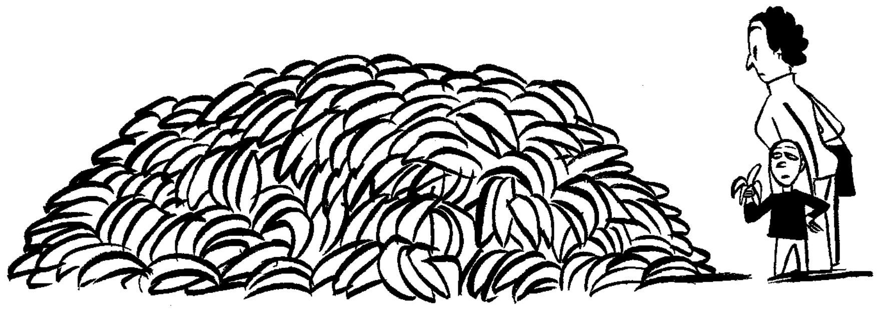
ORANGE YOU GLAD DEPT.

BANANA MAN



When people came across the pile of bananas that Doug Fishbone had arranged in the middle of Washington Street, in Brooklyn, the other day, they naturally had a lot of questions. They wanted to know how many bananas Fishbone had used (seventeen thousand), where he had got them (from a wholesaler at Hunts Point Market, in the Bronx), how much he had paid for them (almost seventeen hundred dollars), and whether he intended the pile as art. (He did, but he wasn't particularly insistent on this point.) Many people took one look at the pile and immediately decided that it was time for a snack. When Fishbone's mother, Anita, caught them, she would run over and say, "Excuse me, would you put that back? It's an art exhibit," at which many would become huffy and stalk off. Perhaps not surprisingly, several viewers asked Fishbone whether his mom, too, was supposed to be part of the exhibit. (She was not.)

Fishbone, who is thirty-three and has been told, with some justification, that he resembles Sly Stallone, came up with the banana project, as he calls it, by chance. A few years ago, after working as a financial adviser at American Express, as a sales rep in the textile industry in Israel, and as a publicist at the firm that manages Luciano Pavarotti, he took a job at a bronze foundry in Queens. Several of his co-workers were from Ecuador, and Fishbone got the idea of going there to live. In the city of Cuenca, he saw a huge pile of plantains being sold by the side of the road as animal feed.



"The thing was such a powerful image," Fishbone recalled. "Something just triggered in my head: I have to do this with bananas." He débuted the project in Cuenca, with twenty-five thousand bananas, and he did it a second time, in the port city of Guayaquil, with forty thousand bananas. (Ecuador is the world's leading banana exporter.) He has also mounted the installation in the Polish city of Piotrków Trybunalski.

Recently, Fishbone, who is attending art school in London, has begun to branch out into other materials; in September he exhibited a model of his head, sculpted out of gyro meat and twirling on a spit. The piece is being stored in the freezer at his mother's house, in Forest Hills. ("She wants me to throw it out," Fishbone acknowledged.)

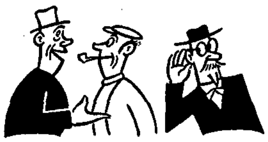
For the Brooklyn installation, it took Fishbone more than five hours to arrange the bananas. When he was done, the fruit formed a conical heap nearly six feet high and ten feet in diameter. It was, if nothing else, an arresting sight—exuberantly yellow and yet oddly serene. Washington Street had been blocked off as part of a neighborhood art festival, and at one point a performance-art troupe wandered by, pretending to be the Brooklyn borough president and his entourage. A while later, the group returned with the real borough president, Marty Markowitz, and his real entourage. Fishbone presented Markowitz with a bunch of bananas. "In case the *Village Voice* is here, I want them to know that this is worth less than twenty-five dollars," Markowitz said, holding up the bunch and giggling. So many people stopped to have their pictures taken next to the bananas that soon the fruit at the edges of the pile was all squished.

In what might be called the conclusion of the banana project, or, alternatively, the beginning of the cleanup effort, Fishbone invites his audience to dismantle the pile. The other day, in the late afternoon, Fishbone and his mother started handing out "I ♥ NY" shopping bags that had been specially purchased for the occasion. Some passersby were bemused; others were downright greedy. A crowd gathered, and someone had the idea of starting a counter-project, a few yards away. As the pile of bananas shrank, a pile of banana peels began to grow. This seemed to fulfill some deep aspiration of Fishbone's. "That's crazy," he said, admiring the peels in the fading light.

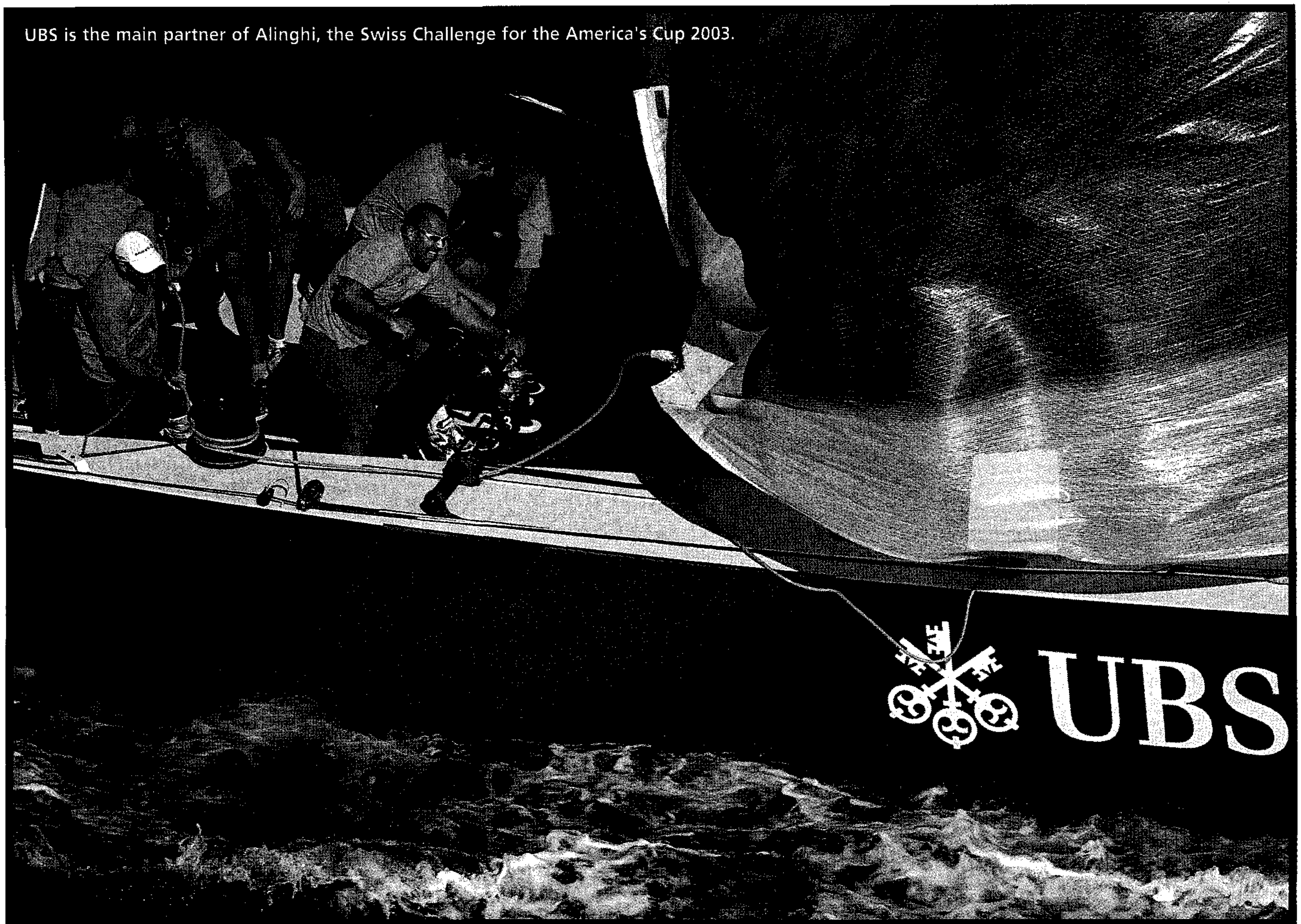
—*Elizabeth Kolbert*

ON THE HORN

VHAT'S UP?



Of all the bad news that has recently hit the gubernatorial campaign of H. Carl McCall, none, perhaps, was more dispiriting than the fact, heretofore unreported, that Isac Weinberger, of Brooklyn, has pretty much conceded the



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race to George Pataki. "McCall will lose," he said quietly last week, amid a crowd of fellow McCall supporters at a fund-raiser for Congressman Charles Rangel in midtown. In the dreary land of city and state politics, Isac (as he is known) has invented a singular niche—that of extreme political buff and magpie. Among political professionals, a constant susurration of gossip and information warfare underscores every campaign season; civilians may not hear or care about any of it, but it often determines who represents them in the end. Isac, a unique hybrid of operative, broker, bureaucrat, groupie, and, above all, gossipmonger, probably spends more time than anyone in town moving this chatter along.

Isac is a fifty-five-year-old Hasidic Jew of the Satmar sect who was born in Hungary and brought up in Williamsburg. He is squat and big-bellied, outwardly gruff but often beaming. He began ringing doorbells for Brooklyn Democrats when he was fourteen. His favorite politician of all time is Abe Beame, and it angers him that no building has been named for him. Isac has worked for the city since 1990 (he was a staunch supporter of David Dinkins) and now has a job at a department that he prefers not to name, it being unclear how much official business he conducts there. "I have a desk and a phone," he has been known to say. He makes good use of this phone by passing the hours calling up reporters at every paper in town. "We call him Brooklyn borough chief," Tom Topousis, who covers politics for the *Post*, says. Isac usually checks in with Topousis several times a day. "So, what's cooking?" Isac asks, in his low growl.

"I always feel compelled to tell him something," Topousis said. "It's like I have two masters: my editor and Isac." In exchange, Isac will tell him something: who's endorsing whom, who's lunching with whose enemy, who's writing what for tomorrow. (Or he may bark, "Your story is nothing!") The information is usually good and often useful. "You sell and you buy, you buy and you sell," Isac said. In Room 9, the press headquarters at City Hall, this process repeats itself throughout the morning: one reporter will hang up with Isac, and five seconds later another reporter's phone will ring. ("Incoming!" is another way of saying, "It's Isac!") It is believed that Isac can disseminate a piece of gossip to ten reporters in fifteen minutes.

"He calls me up regularly to pick me dry," Richard Schrader, the political consultant, said. "After he hangs up, the reporters are on me within minutes. It's the verbal equivalent of a boomerang."

For such enthusiasm and efficiency, Isac has earned the admiration, canned though it may sound, of Democratic Party leaders past and present. "He's a dedicated Democratic activist who always has a smile on his face," Hillary Clinton said, through a spokeswoman. "I think he's terrific," said Dinkins.

No one ever writes about Isac, but the

'NSPACE: DIARY OF A COSMONAUT

Pop star Lance Bass is back at Russia's cosmonaut center for a new training session, despite being excluded from the crew of a rocket heading to the international space station next month. The 'NSync singer, who was ordered to leave the Star City cosmonaut training ground earlier this month after failing to pay for the trip, has returned to the center outside Moscow.—*Associated Press*

November 4: First meeting with the Russian astronauts. The youngest guy knows the words to all the 'NSync songs. His name is Boris, and I like him the best. Sasha and Grigory are O.K., too. The only one I am a little afraid of is Pyotor, the captain, who is stern and can grow a beard. I like to think of us as a boy band: an older, non-singing, non-American boy band that's really smart about science and stuff.

November 5: Today, I taught Boris how to do the dance routine from "Girlfriend." I cannot ever forget that I am a cultural ambassador.

November 6: Huge news today! Grigory got sick—too much Tang—and I got promoted from trainee to crew member. That means I'm going into space. This made Boris happy, but not Captain Pyotor. When he saw me, he said that my last name rhymes with "ass," which is true but not nice, and then he cursed at me in Russian. He called me *sobaka* and *podlets* and *preposterous*.

November 7: I cannot possibly describe the sublime experience of blast-off—the fulminous roar of the engines, the craft's upjut into infinite space. It recalls to me Wordsworth's description of escaping from the deck of a steamboat: "That he might fly, where no one could pursue, / From this dull Monster and her sooty crew; / And, as a God, light on thy topmost cliff."

November 8: The earth looks different from up here. So tiny, and yet so many record sales. I get choked up when I think about it. Must remember this feeling so I can summon it up when harmonizing on sad ballads.

November 9: We docked at the space station, and I got into another argument with Captain Pyotor. I was just floating by the window humming "Tearin' Up My Heart," and he started to scream at me. Boris explained that Pyotor is upset because he's having problems with his wife. "What are we doing out here in space if we are still trapped on earth in our minds?" I said. Boris told me I should tell Captain Pyotor that myself, so we floated over to him and I talked while Boris translated. Finally, Captain Pyotor turned to me. His eyes were wet with tears.

November 10: Tomorrow we go back to earth. I can't believe that the best space trip ever is almost over.

November 11: Captain Pyotor woke me up this morning. "At first, I was suspicious of you," he said. "But you have taught me so much about myself that I must reward you." Then he told me that I could drive the ship back to earth. I sat down in the captain's seat, which is much taller and fancier than all the other seats, and made of solid gold. "Let's go home," I said, and fired up the rockets. As we entered the earth's orbit and the hull began to glow, Captain Pyotor unbuckled his belt, floated partway out of his seat, and began to dance just like I do in the "Pop" video. He was amazing! Why were we ever not friends with Russia? Tonight, when he introduced me at the press conference, he pronounced my last name wrong, so that it rhymed with "space." I think he did it on purpose.

—*Ben Greenman*

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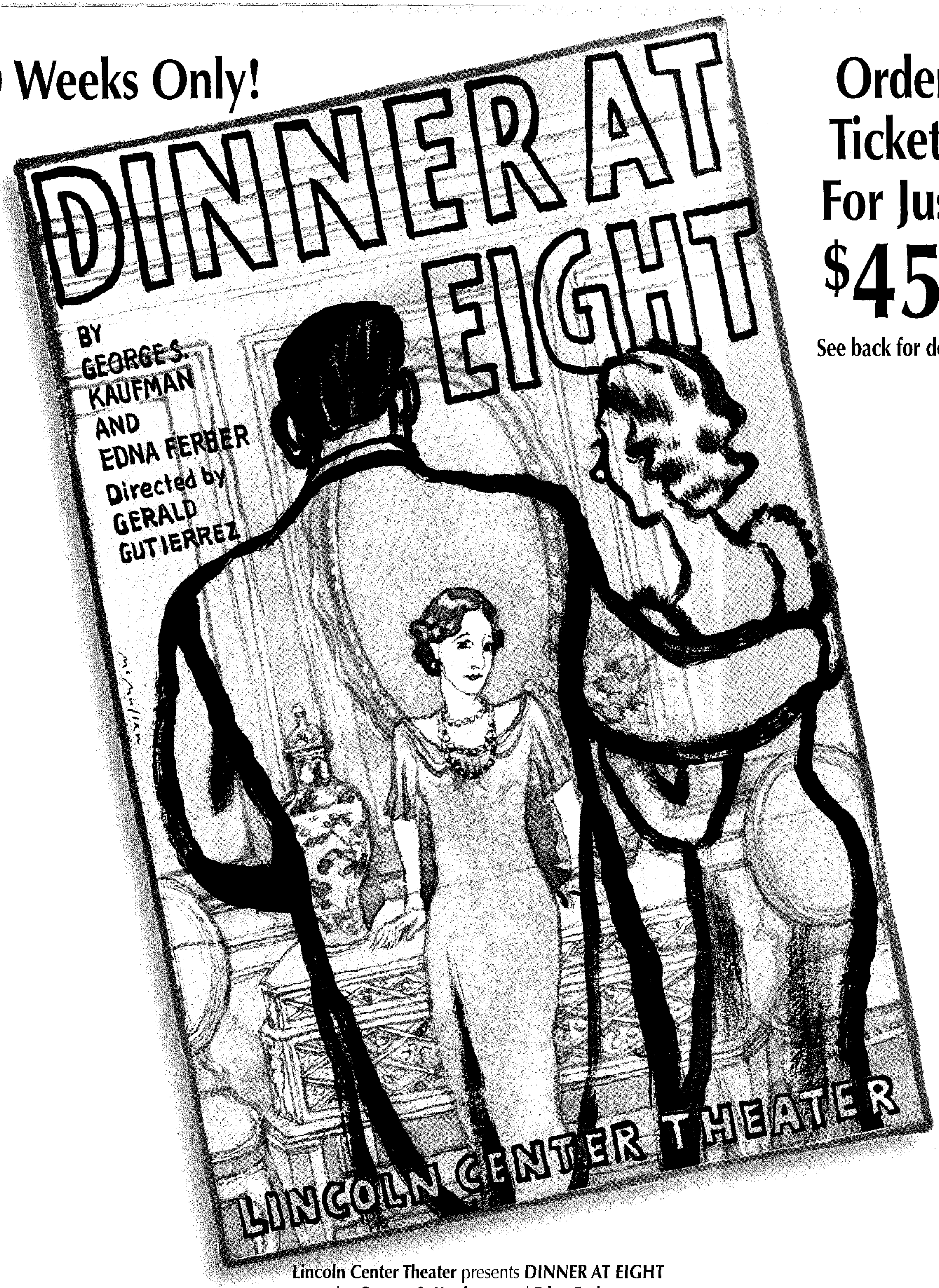
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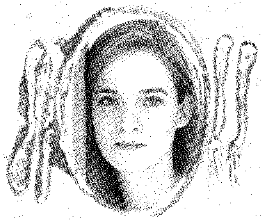
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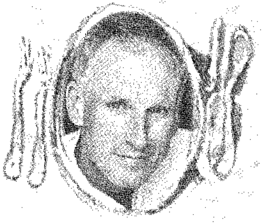
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reporters do talk about him among themselves. At political events, when Isac buttonholes Bill Clinton or Mario Cuomo, the reporters say, "Who's the guy standing next to Isac?" When Isac is introduced at such functions, they call his cursory dignitarial wave "the Queen Mum." They marvel at his ubiquity: there have been near-simultaneous Isac sightings at events in neighborhoods as far apart as Borough Park and Forest Hills. They speculate that there must be more than one of him.

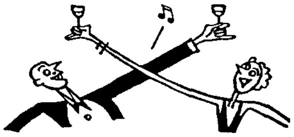
At the Rangel fund-raiser last week, Isac, in his black coat and yarmulke, stood just inside the door, restlessly awaiting the arrival of elected officials. He greeted many of them with bear hugs, unless they were women, in which case he spoke without touching them. ("They understand," he said. "It's my religion.") Between greetings, Isac stood alone and revelled in the spectacle of politicians and donors milling around to the strains of "The Girl from Ipanema." The arrival of Andrew Cuomo, who dropped out of the race for governor in September (a turn of events for which Isac does not completely disavow responsibility), had Isac practically bouncing. He embraced Cuomo and said, "You'll get them next time. Like I told you in December, in any other race I will support you, as I always supported your father, but this was not your time. It was McCall's." The look that crossed Cuomo's face was, you might say, one of professional forbearance.

Later, as Isac nudged his way toward Rangel, he found himself standing near the actor Chevy Chase, the evening's master of ceremonies. Isac seemed uncharacteristically unimpressed. Someone said, "There's Chevy Chase. Do you know him?"

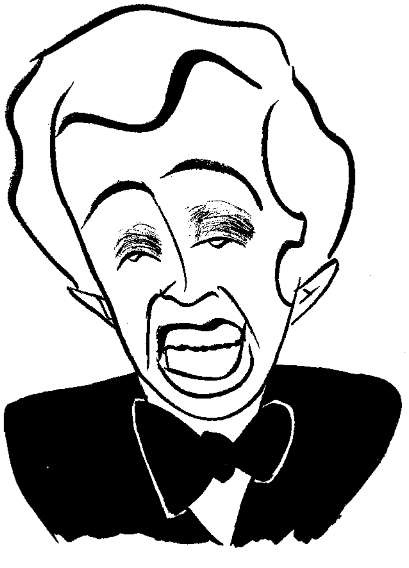
Isac wasn't sure. "Vhat district?"

—*Nick Paumgarten*

POSTSCRIPT
ADOLPH GREEN



From the late thirties, when Adolph Green was one-third of the cabaret act "The Revuers" (his partners were Judy Holliday and his lifelong collaborator, Betty Comden), and until his death, last week, at the age of eighty-six, he never lost his talent for joy. He was irrepressible. Song was his natural atmosphere. He had a glad heart and a gift for enthusiasm. His particular brand of buoyancy found its public expression in more than thirty musicals, among them "On the Town," "Wonderful Town," "Bells Are Ringing," and "Singin' in the Rain," whose popularity helped give postwar America an exhilarating backbeat of promise. In private, his performing gene was equally original and prodigious. Green, who never went to college, had an encyclopedic memory for music and for film. At the merest coaxing, he would do his Maurice Chevalier or become an entire orchestra. "He would do complex things," Mike Nichols recalls. "He could sing a symphony"—or, literally, throw himself into song. Head bobbing, voice croaking, arms pinwheeling, Green whipped himself up until he attained full dervishosity. A sort of prodigy of playfulness, he was unabashed by silliness and quite capable of pursuing frivolity to zany heights. In his version of "Flight of the Bumble Bee," for instance, he would start as if he were playing the violin, only to end up flitting and buzzing like the bee.



Adolph Green

Green loved the city, and co-wrote one of its most celebrated anthems. "New York, New York, a helluva town" spoke his heart. He never missed a party or an opening. In the aristocracy of success, there are no strangers; and Green knew everyone. For most of his life, he looked out at the city from the nineteenth floor of the Beresford, where from his large patio he could gaze south down Central Park West toward Broadway, which dimmed its lights in honor of his passing. Although Green suffered from macular degeneration and was nearly blind for about a decade, that didn't stop him from sauntering, Magoo-like, around town, singing and conducting to himself. "Why he wasn't killed by a bus I don't know," the Beresford's doorman said. His usual circuit took him to Betty Comden's apartment, the classical-music section of Tower Records, and back home via Zabar's. Sometimes he got lost, and strangers would deliver him home "as if they were the lucky ones," his daughter Amanda Green recalls. She adds, "He was great company." Recently, Amanda, who is a singer and a songwriter, decided to ask her father for some show-biz advice. "Never take 'if' for an answer," Green told her.

On the last night of his life, Green, having dressed to go out for dinner with his son, Adam, decided to stay in. They ordered takeout from Shun Lee West. (Among his friends from as far back as the M-G-M days, Green was the "designated finisher" of each dish of Chinese food.) Green finished his meal and his Martini; then, feeling unwell, he went upstairs to take a nap, and he never awoke. That evening, Green had talked to Adam about why he hadn't gone to his own father's funeral. "It turned out, with a little pressing, that he didn't like him," Adam said. "He told my dad, 'You're not a human being; you're a piece of meat, taking up space on this earth.'" Green's life and his work were pitched against that dark prophecy. Green, one of the last great figures of Broadway's Golden Age, composed lyrics and musical librettos that sang and danced him into the nation's dream life. He made harmony and banished gravity for a living. He never stopped insisting on delight. Green's wife of forty-two years, the actress Phyllis Newman, tells of going with him to the movies and hearing an actor on the screen declare, "I've tasted death. Have you?" Green called out, "Yes, and it tastes like chicken."

—*John Lahr*

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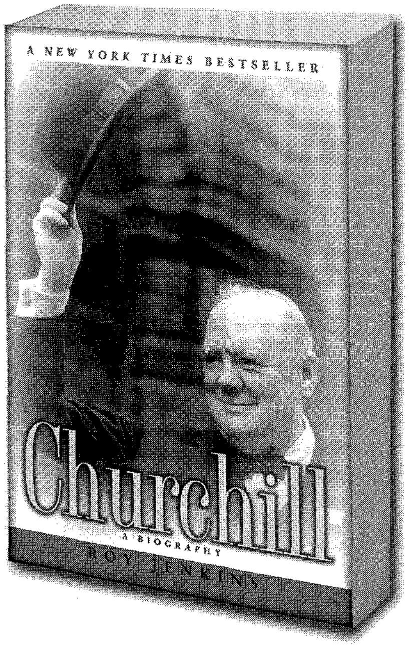

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LETTER FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA

THE GOLDEN BOUGH

Grant Hadwin got a chainsaw and did something terrible.

BY JOHN VAILLANT

There was only one giant golden spruce in the world, and, until a man named Grant Hadwin took a chainsaw to it, in 1997, it had stood for more than three hundred years in a steadily shrinking patch of old-growth forest in Port Clements, on the banks of the Yakoun River, in the Queen Charlotte Islands. The Queen Charlottes, a blade-shaped archipelago that lies sixty miles off the northern coast of British Columbia and thirty miles south of the Alaskan coast, are one of a decreasing number of places in the Pacific Northwest where large stands of virgin coastal forest can still be found. Ecotourism is a growth industry here, and the golden spruce was a popular stop on visitors' itineraries. The tree was also sacred to the Haida Indians, two thousand of whom still live on the islands.

The golden spruce was remarkable enough to warrant its own scientific name: *Picea sitchensis* 'Aurea.' The tree, a Sitka spruce, lacked eighty per cent of a normal specimen's allotment of chlorophyll, and, as a result, its needles were golden yellow instead of green. Unlike a typical Sitka spruce, which sends its branches off haphazardly, the golden spruce was, for reasons no one can explain, perfectly coniform. It stood out in the deep, green forest like a giant yellow Christmas tree. Several other golden spruces are rumored to exist in the Queen Charlottes, but they reportedly lack their famous counterpart's distinctive shape and are smaller and less uniformly yellow than the Yakoun River specimen, which had been standing long enough to be named K'iid K'iyass (Old Tree) by the Haida people and to be incorporated into their oral history.

On the night of January 20, 1997, Grant Hadwin, then forty-seven, stripped off his clothes and plunged into the Yakoun River, towing a chainsaw behind him. The river was swift and the water was cold, but this was no problem for Hadwin, a self-described "extreme swimmer" who had alarmed local police in Whitehorse, Yukon, earlier that winter by spending a quarter of an hour in the Yukon River when the air temperature was thirty-five degrees below zero. The golden spruce was more than six feet in diameter, and Hadwin's chainsaw had only a twenty-five-inch bar, but Hadwin had worked in the timber industry for years, and he knew how to make falling cuts. Leaving just enough of the core intact so that the tree would stand until the next windstorm, he returned by ferry from the island to the mainland port town of Prince Rupert. Shortly afterward, copies of a letter he had drafted were received by Greenpeace, the Vancouver *Sun*, members of the Haida Nation, and MacMillan Bloedel, Canada's biggest lumber company, which had a timber lease on the land on which the golden spruce stood. The letter said, in part:

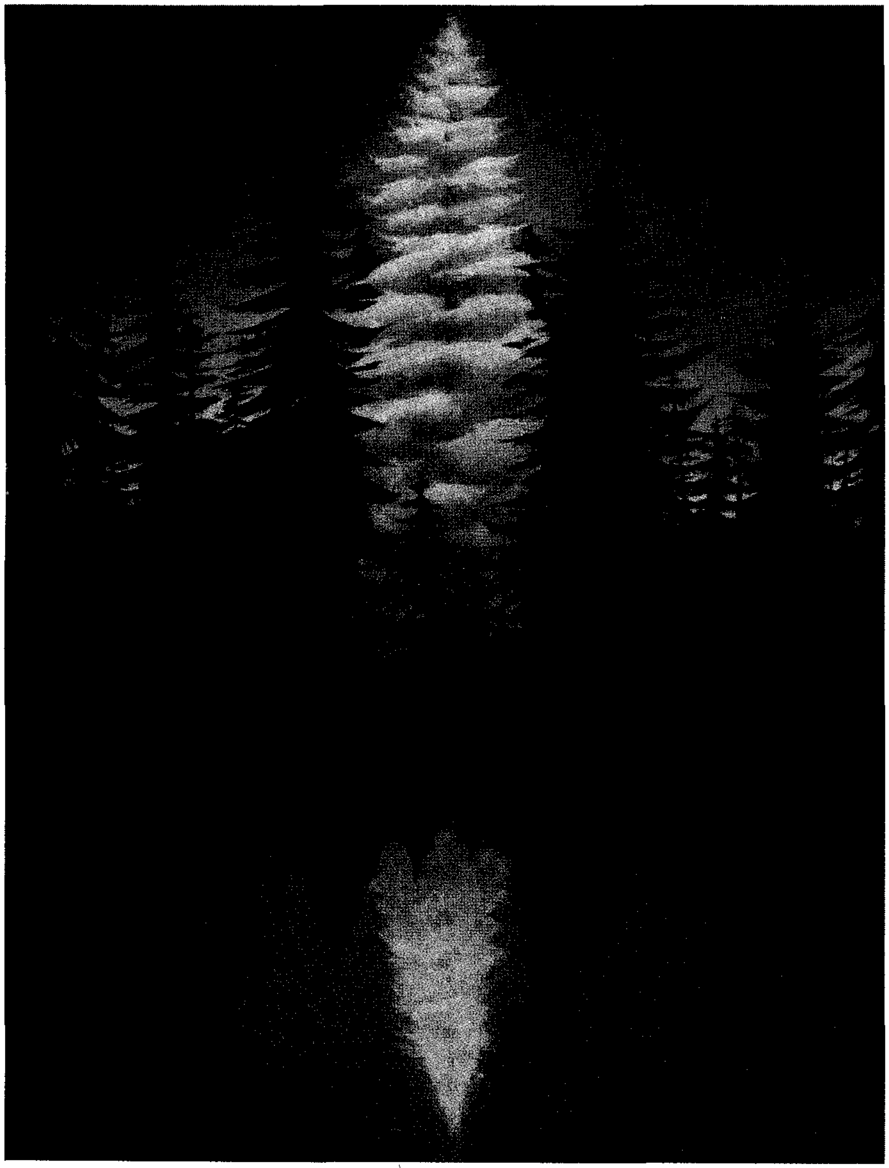
> I didn't enjoy butchering, this magnificent old plant, but you apparently need a message and wake-up call, that even a university trained professional, should be able to understand. . . . I mean this action, to be an expression, of my rage and hatred, towards university trained professionals and their extremist supporters, whose ideas, ethics, denials, part truths, attitudes, etc., appear to be responsible, for most of the abominations, towards amateur life on this planet.

The golden spruce fell a couple of days later. Locally, the reaction was extraordinary. "It was like a drive-by shooting in a small town," one resident of the islands told me. "People were crying; they were in shock. They felt enormous guilt for not protecting the tree better." This was in part because, according to Haida legend, the golden spruce represented a person; and, later, a public memorial service for the tree, presided over by several Haida chiefs, was held "to mourn one of our ancestors." But beyond the mourning, some Haida, as well as residents of the mostly white logging community of Port Clements (where the tree had stood), wanted revenge.

Hadwin was located quickly by the

Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and, after being charged and ordered to appear at the courthouse in Masset, which is close to the Queen Charlottes' two remaining Haida communities, he was released on his own recognizance. Hadwin, who was already known to—and suspicious of—the police, was offered no protection and did not request it. "They're making it as nasty as they possibly can," he told a reporter at the time. "They'll want me over there so the natives will have a shot. It would probably be suicide to go over there real quick."

Hadwin could have flown or taken a ferry from the mainland to Masset, but he chose instead to travel to court by kayak, leading people to believe that he was going to attempt a sixty-mile midwinter crossing of the notoriously dangerous Hecate Strait. In fact, Hadwin was last seen paddling north—bound, it seemed, for Alaska.



In Haida legend, the tree represented a person, and some Haida wanted revenge.

ANA JUAN

Throughout his turbulent and peripatetic life, Grant Hadwin demonstrated a level of woodsmanship and an imperviousness to the elements worthy of a character from the pages of Robert Service or Jack London. His wife, Margaret, from whom he has been separated for a decade, described him as "indestructible," an opinion shared by many who have known him. "Basically, you're dealing with a person who, with very few resources, could be dropped anywhere on earth and come up smelling like a rose," Cory Delves, one of Hadwin's former bosses, told me.

Hadwin always felt most at home in the forest. During his late teens and twenties, he worked as a lumberjack and gold miner and lived in the mining town of Gold Bridge, British Columbia, a five-hour drive north from Vancouver. It is a tough, marginal place that is now inhabited by fewer than a hundred people and is accessible only by rough logging roads lined with fatal drop-offs. When Hadwin first showed up there, in the mid-nineteen-sixties, the surrounding valleys were thick with virgin, high-altitude timber. Today, as in much of British Columbia, vast clear-cuts push outward in every direction, giving the mountains the appearance of enormous animals unevenly shorn of their coats. The Northwest coast is, for all practical purposes, a rain forest, and the tall timber it nurtures can live for a thousand years and grow to heights that rival California's redwoods. (A Sitka spruce taken from the same forest where the golden spruce stood left a stump seventeen feet in diameter.) It was Hadwin, in his most successful incarnation, as a forest technician, who laid out many of the roads that gave loggers access to the remote forest around Gold Bridge. In the end, he helped to raze the site of many of his happiest memories.

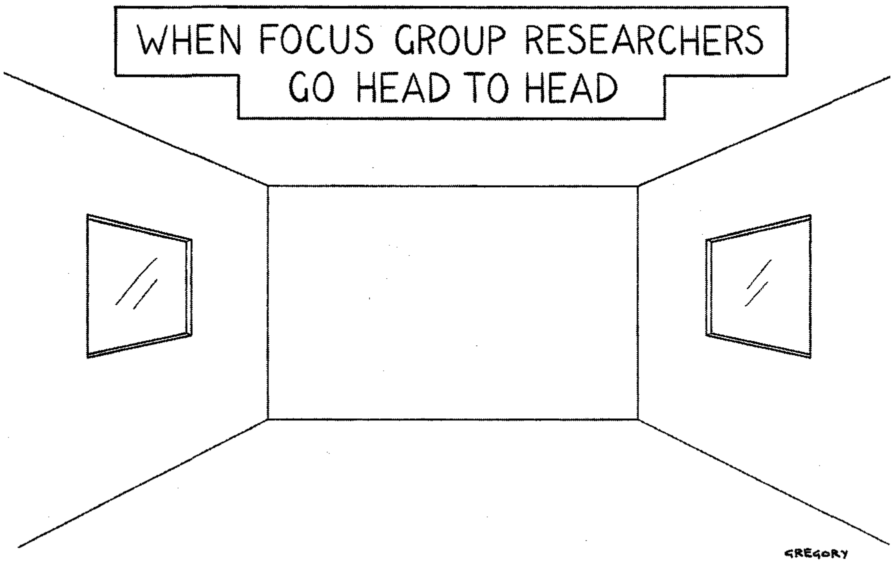
Hadwin was well known for outdoing his co-workers. Paul Bernier, a longtime colleague and close friend of his, told me, "He was in the best condition of any man I've ever seen." Bernier was with Hadwin when he outwitted a pair of charging grizzly bears by dodging across a stream and feinting upwind, where they couldn't smell him. In addition to consuming prodigious quantities of chewing tobacco, Hadwin was known for buying vodka by the case and going on spectacular binges that, even in freezing weather, would leave him unconscious in the back of his vintage Studebaker pickup or passed out in a snow-filled ditch, dressed only in slacks and shirtsleeves. There was a local joke: "Look, that snowbank is moving. Must be Grant."

Early photographs of Hadwin show a fine-boned, handsome man, slightly less than six feet tall and built like a distance runner. People who knew him during his Gold Bridge days likened his lean, sharp-eyed appearance and remote manner to Clint Eastwood's. Quiet and courteous though Hadwin usually was, he possessed an almost tangible intensity, a piercing, in-your-face conviction that some found alarming. "He always had to be the best, had to be first," his Aunt Barbara recalled. "It always had to be Grant's way. There was never any room for compromise."

The golden spruce wasn't discovered by scientists until it was almost three hundred years old. When the Scottish timber surveyor and baronet Sir Windham Anstruther stumbled upon it, in 1924, he was dumbfounded. "I didn't even make an axe mark on it, being, I suppose, a bit overcome by its strangeness in a forest of green," he told a reporter before he died. For years afterward, no one knew quite what to make of Sir Windham's arboreal unicorn. Some suggested that it might be a new species, unique to the archipelago; others thought the tree had been hit by lightning, or was simply dying. In fact, the golden spruce was alive and well; it was just fantastically rare. Only a chance mutation would ever produce another.

A tree with this mutation is called a "chlorotic," and although it is not uncommon to see a chlorotic branch or two on an otherwise healthy evergreen, it is in theory almost impossible for an entire tree to be chlorotic and survive. Because this condition causes a fatal intolerance to bright sunshine, no one knows why the golden spruce was able to compete so well against healthy trees for centuries, or why it was able to grow to more than a hundred and sixty feet tall. Some contemporary scientists believe the tree's success may have been due to the unique lighting conditions afforded by its location. The Charlottes are sometimes called the Misty Isles; they share southeast Alaska's weather (as much as twelve feet of rain per year), and direct sunshine is a rare occurrence. It is conceivable that the island's climate provided just enough light to facilitate photosynthesis and turn the needles yellow, while diffusing the light sufficiently to keep the needles from burning out and dropping off. D'Arcy Davis-Case, a forestry expert who lived in the Queen Charlottes for years before becoming a consultant to the United Nations on forestry issues, said that when she lived there botanists and dendrologists were always trying to explain the tree's golden color. When I asked what they had concluded, she smiled and rolled her eyes. "Magic!" she said.

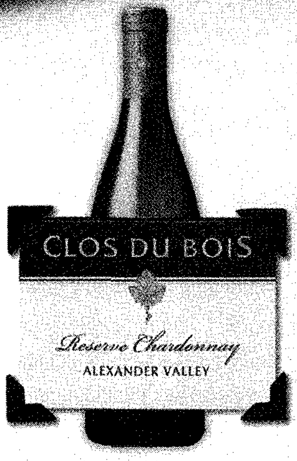
To those who were lucky enough to have seen the tree in bright sunshine, Davis-Case's explanation sounds plausible enough. Many who saw the golden spruce spoke of its peculiar radiance, as if it were actually generating light from deep within its branches. Marilyn Baldwin, the owner of a sporting-goods store in Prince Rupert, saw the tree on a gray, foggy day in the early nineties. "A few minutes after we got there, the sun burned the fog off, and suddenly there it was in its golden brilliance," she recalled. "We called it the ooh-aah tree, because that's what it made us all say." Ruth Jones, a Vancouver-based artist, visited the golden spruce late one sunny afternoon in 1994. "It looked as if it were made of glowing gold," she said. "It was like a fairy tale. How can this be?"


WHEN FOCUS GROUP RESEARCHERS GO HEAD TO HEAD
GREGORY

The Queen Charlottes have always had a somewhat mystical reputation; even loggers and land-use planners employ the adjective "magic" to describe them. The hundred-and-eighty-mile-long chain comprises the most remote of all the West Coast islands, and, in many ways, they are a world apart, hosting species and subspecies that occur nowhere else. The Haida language, too, is an "isolate," unrelated to that of any other West Coast tribe, and the largest collection of historic totem poles in North America that still survive in their original, beachfront locations are situated here.

Haida warriors, who ranged widely throughout the North Pacific, became legendary for a ferocity and maritime daring comparable to that of the Vikings. One of their seagoing canoes—sixty-three feet long and hewed from a single log—is on permanent display at the American Museum of Natural History, in New York. During the nineteenth century, the Haida's numbers were reduced from as many as twenty thousand to fewer than six hundred by warfare and a biological holocaust of smallpox and venereal disease which accompanied British and American fur traders, settlers, and missionaries. Many of the survivors converted to Christianity and were absorbed into the nascent fishing and logging industries. Since then, these core industries have been practiced in a rapacious and indiscriminate fashion, and today the numbers of fish and old-growth trees have been reduced almost as dramatically as those of the Haida.

In the mid-sixties, MacMillan Bloedel had reluctantly set aside the few acres of old-growth forest remaining around the golden spruce. In 1988, after a long battle that pitted logging interests and the British Columbia government against a coalition of environmental groups and the Haida, the southern half of the chain was designated a national park reserve that includes a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The land is currently owned by the Canadian government ("the Crown"), which leases it to MacMillan Bloedel, which is now owned by Weyerhaeuser. Before long, tour buses began lining up to see the tree, and in 1996 the local tourist trade got an additional boost when an albino raven showed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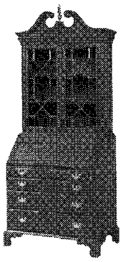

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Let us weep, lament the enormous loss.
Let us smear our faces with coal, disarrange our hair.

Let us implore, so that it is returned to us,
The second space.

—*Czeslaw Milosz*

(*Translated, from the Polish, by the author, Robert Hass, and Renata Gorczynski.*)

up, one of only two known to exist in the entire country. Between it and the golden spruce, Port Clements had cornered the freak-of-nature market in western Canada.

Despite his mountain-man pretensions, Thomas Grant Hadwin could never wholly conceal his middle-class origins. He was born into an educated family from West Vancouver. His father graduated at the top of his class from the University of British Columbia's electrical-engineering program and became a senior engineer with BC Hydro, the province's biggest power company. Grant was the younger of two sons, who were brought up to be like their father—competitive and stubborn. Nothing, however, went as planned: Grant's older brother was given a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia, and Grant quit school and left home at seventeen.

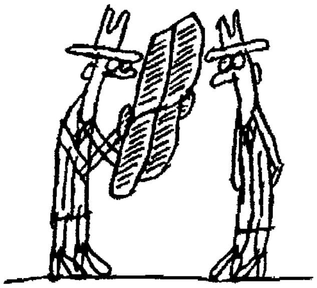
Grant headed north, first working for a maternal uncle who owned a logging company that was engaged in clear-cutting the valleys above Vancouver. He was ideally suited to the work, and the isolated life style captured his imagination, not least because it flew in the face of his father's professional ambitions. But, even as Hadwin relished the bush life, he was horrified by what he saw. His paternal aunt, Barbara Johnson, recalls that Grant, who visited her as a teen-ager, described logging techniques that stripped the mountainsides down to bare rock. "Nothing's going to grow there again," he told her.

Meanwhile, his brother had become increasingly ill, and in 1971 he killed himself in a leap from the Lions Gate Bridge, in Vancouver. By this time, Grant had migrated to Gold Bridge, where he, too, with his excessive drinking, appeared to be well on his way to an early death. By the mid-nineteen-seventies, though, he seemed to right himself. He earned a forest technician's degree and, in 1978, he swore off alcohol and got married; Grant and Margaret, who was a nurse from Lillooet, about sixty miles away, had three children. In order to house his family, Grant built what would be the most imposing residence in Gold Bridge, two and a half stories tall and made entirely of hand-hewn logs. The capstone on the oversized chimney was a mattress-size slab of granite that weighed more than four tons.

Hadwin had also found his calling. After he had worked as a logger, a rock driller, a blaster, and a prospector, Evans Wood Products, in Lillooet, put him in charge of surveying "merchantable" timber in the deep wilderness and laying out roads to make it accessible. By most accounts, Hadwin was extremely good in the field, but this did not help him at the office. In 1983, Hadwin lost out on a major promotion. (He had been inserting critiques of the company into his written memos.) "He was out of time," Brian Tremblay, who has known Hadwin since they were teen-agers, recalled. "He was on his own trajectory. He was talking environment and proper forest management before anybody."

Hadwin believed in balance—in taking the good with the bad, the best with the bug-ridden—when it was standard practice to just skim the cream and move on. He quit Evans Products on bitter terms and went to work on his own. By this time, the impact of logging on the country around Gold Bridge had become painfully clear. According to Ecotrust, an Oregon-based conservation group, California, Oregon, and Washington have lost ninety per cent of their combined coastal rain forest, while British Columbia, which originally had twice as much forest area, has lost forty per cent. Hadwin was aware of this, and so is Al Wanderer, who worked with Hadwin in the early eighties. "We basically gutted the place," he told me last October, referring to some of the logging around Gold Bridge. "Good God," he went on, "I didn't think it was possible to log this much." Wanderer looked down into his beer and added, "I've made a good living, but sometimes you wonder if it's all worth it."

Hadwin struggled to find a way to remain gainfully employed in the woods without gutting them. For three years after leaving Evans, he ran his own logging operation outside Gold Bridge, where he made railroad ties by cutting selectively and salvaging trees that had been killed by a beetle infestation. "That guy worked hard," his neighbor Tom Illidge said. "It would have taken three normal men to do what he did up there." Despite his superhuman efforts, Hadwin couldn't make it pay, so he went into freelance consulting, where his increasingly pro-forest views and decreasing familiarity with contemporary practices worked against him.



In 1983, when Hadwin quit his job, he was in his mid-thirties. He was opinionated and eccentric, but he was also a family man, a strenuous provider, and a helpful neighbor. "He wasn't lazy and he wasn't crazy," Tom Illidge told me. Illidge is one of Gold Bridge's oldest and most successful residents, one of the few who stayed put and prospered there. He sympathized with Hadwin's disdain for the company men who wield so much power over the forest without knowing their way around it. "Half of those assholes have never been four feet from a parking meter in their lives," he said. But while Illidge, Al Wanderer, and Corey Delves were able to swallow their irritation and press on, Hadwin had become increasingly frustrated and bitter. He began writing letters to powerful political figures all over Canada and the world. To CNN, he wrote:

> Your focus appears to be Bosnia and O. J. Simpson. Your Native American problem, however, parallels our own and yet your coverage, appears to be non-existent. . . . You would apparently go to *any* lengths to deflect the focus from the real issues, which discredit yourselves or your professional institutions.

In 1991, Grant and Margaret separated, and she got custody of the children. (She continued to pay Hadwin's Visa bills, with the help of a sizable inheritance from his father.) By 1993, Hadwin had begun to experience episodes of paranoia, one of which compelled him to seek refuge on a remote island off the coast of Alaska; his rented kayak was punctured en route, and he lived off the land for twelve days before he was rescued by the Coast Guard. Later that summer, Hadwin was stopped at the United States border with three thousand hypodermic needles in the trunk of his car. He talked his way through Customs and proceeded to Washington, D.C., where he distributed the needles on the street along with condoms, presenting himself as an advocate of needle exchange and safe sex. In July, with two thousand needles remaining, he caught

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a plane to Moscow; from there, he continued eastward, donating needles to children's hospitals as he went. He was arrested by the police in Irkutsk, Siberia, but apparently finessed the interview and parted on good terms. Hadwin wasn't simply on a good-will mission, however; he was also looking for work. Siberia is one of the few places in the Northern Hemisphere whose forests rival British Columbia's, and shortly before he disappeared he spoke of wanting to return there.

When Hadwin came back to Kamloops, a town of eighty thousand in south-central British Columbia, where his wife and children lived, people who knew him were alarmed by what they saw. The guerrilla-theatre dress he wore on his travels (running shorts, boots with spurs, and a baseball cap festooned with needles and condoms) raised questions about his mental state. After an altercation with a truck driver, he was sent to a forensic hospital for psychiatric evaluation. Hadwin was interviewed extensively by several doctors, and, although all of them found evidence of what one psychiatrist termed "paranoid reaction," the only diagnosis they could agree on was that he was mentally competent and fit to stand trial.

Hadwin's letter-writing campaign intensified, and within this raft of letters and faxes is what seems to be a last attempt to find acceptable employment. On January 12, 1996, in response to an ad for a Forest Renewal Project coördinator, Hadwin sent his résumé, along with this self-defeatingly honest cover letter:

> I do not like clearcutting and my philosophical differences, with the Forest Industry, run deep. If you are prepared to try a "gentler approach," to forestry, with less "short term profit," I may be able to help. I am not familiar with the new "buzzwords," such as Forest Renewal. All of Forestry and most of the Forests, appear to need "renewing," in some form or another.

Hadwin didn't get the job. Five months later, he left Kamloops after befriending Cora Gray, an elder from the Gitanmaax tribe, in British Columbia's interior. Gray had a kindly, forgiving manner, and, from shortly after they met until the day that Hadwin disappeared, she served as his closest friend and confessor. He told her everything, it seemed, except his plan to cut down the golden spruce.

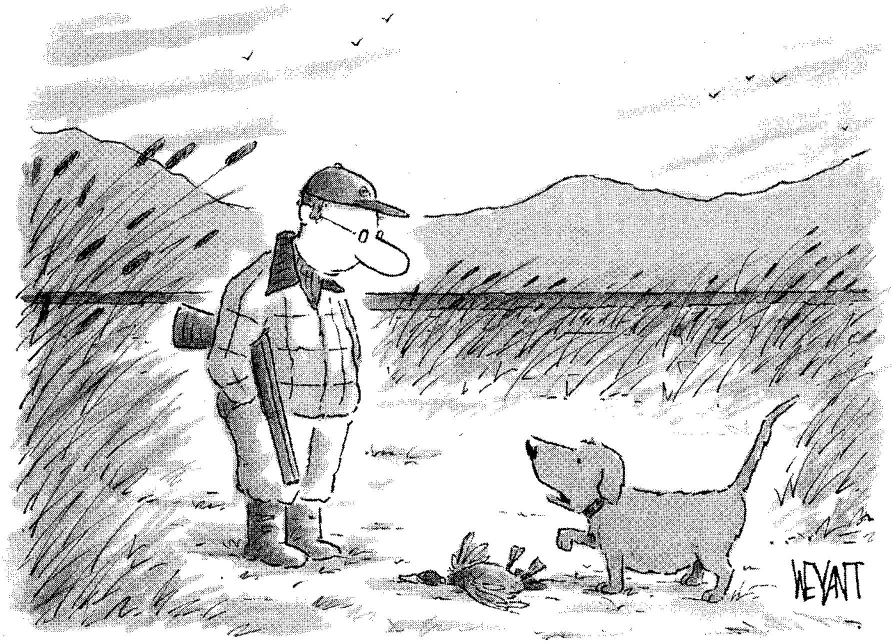
That fall, Hadwin moved to a hotel in Whitehorse, Yukon, and in November he persuaded Gray to join him there. She was watching when he swam in the Yukon River, despite the arctic temperatures. "The water was smoking," Gray recalled. "When he got out, there were icicles hanging off his eyebrows and hair. He ran back to the car, where I was waiting, and he said, 'I know I'm O.K. when you're there watching me.' I asked him, 'Why are you torturing yourself?' and he said, 'I'm training myself. I won't be around here next year.' I knew he was planning something."

Local natives took Gray aside and told her they had a bad feeling about Hadwin, that she should get away from him. "When I mentioned flying home," she said, "he cried like a baby, saying, 'I think you're the only one who's ever worried about me.'" Hadwin told her not to answer the phone when her sisters called. "Finally, I persuaded him that I had to go home, and he offered to drive me. He said, 'Don't tell your sisters you're coming home; surprise them.'"

Gray and Hadwin left Whitehorse at 4 A.M. on December 30th, setting out on a fifteen-hour drive, through extremely remote country, to Gray's home in Hazelton, British Columbia. At five-thirty that afternoon, two hours north of Hazelton, they reached the one-lane bridge that spans the Nass River. Hadwin headed toward it at full speed, and, despite the bright moonlight, he failed to register that a pickup truck was crossing from the other direction. The road was icy at the entrance ramp and, at the last minute, Hadwin hit the brakes. His car, a Honda Civic, skidded and went sideways, up onto the railing. Gray believed she had reached the end of her life.

In the end, they didn't go into the Nass; they hit the pickup head on. Gray's ankles were shattered, her cheek was broken, and both hands were bruised; Hadwin suffered only a cut lip. Gray's ankles had to be repaired with screws and plates, and now she must use a walker to get around. Hadwin visited Gray in the hospital every day until he left for the Charlottes on January 12th. 'I've always wondered if Grant was trying to kill us both," she said to me shortly before I left for the Charlottes, "so he wouldn't have to be alone."

Once Hadwin was in the Charlottes, he gave every impression of being a man on a one-way trip. While staying in a motel at the sparsely inhabited north end of Graham Island, he gave away all his possessions. "Take whatever you want, because I'm going to burn the rest," he told Jennifer Wilson, the twenty-year-old daughter of the motel's manager. Hadwin went on at length about university-trained professionals, referring to them as "an incestuous breed of insidious manipulators." He advocated terrorism as the most effective means of bringing about



"Of course, I expect a ten-per-cent finder's fee."

change, and he talked a great deal about trees. "I learned a lot from him about the forest," Wilson told me. "I got the sense he had found his purpose."

After buying a gas can, falling wedges, and a chainsaw, Hadwin relocated to Port Clements, where he checked into the Golden Spruce motel. The last time Wilson saw him, he was wearing earplugs; he had to wear them, he told her, because every word he heard felt like a direct insult.

Hadwin's chainsaw roared through the night of January 20th. In the morning, he gave the saw to an acquaintance and returned to the mainland, where he sent his final fax, the entire text of which was published in the local papers seven days after the tree was discovered. During the following weeks, Hadwin carried on a dialogue with infuriated locals through newspapers on both sides of Hecate Strait. "Right now, people are focusing all their anger on me when they should focus it on the destruction going on around them," he told a reporter for the Queen Charlottes' *Observer*. "They should see a person who is normally very respectful of life and has done a very disrespectful thing and ask why."

But this was asking too much. Hadwin had cut down what may have been the only tree on the continent capable of bonding loggers, natives, and environmentalists in sorrow and outrage. Meanwhile, newspaper and television reporters from across Canada were coming to the Queen Charlottes to cover the story, which also found its way into the *Times* and onto the Discovery Channel. "When society places so much value on one mutant tree and ignores what happens to the rest of the forest, it's not the person who points this out who should be labelled," Hadwin told a Prince Rupert reporter who questioned his sanity. Hadwin was charged with criminal mischief—damage in excess of five thousand dollars—and the illegal cutting of timber. There was no precedent for how a local judge and jury might compute the cultural damage to the Haida, the economic damage to Port Clements, or the loss to science.

With his belongings liquidated and his safety in doubt, Hadwin was down to the contents of a single suitcase and a Visa card. Among the last items charged were an expedition-grade sea kayak, a camping tarp, a cookstove, a life vest, an axe, and a shovel—everything one would need for a long trip up the West Coast. After notifying Cora Gray, his wife, Margaret, and Prince Rupert's *Daily News*, Hadwin set off across Hecate Strait late on the afternoon of February 11th, bound for his court date. Hadwin had told everyone that he was travelling this way because he was afraid he would be attacked by locals if he took the ferry or a plane. Both Cora and Margaret notified the Mounties, who intercepted Hadwin before he left Prince Rupert Harbour, but Constable Bruce Jeffrey, an experienced kayaker and one of the officers on the scene, was unable to dissuade him. "He wasn't irrational," Jeffrey told me. "He wasn't suicidal, but I could tell he was a few fries short of a Happy Meal. Unfortunately, you can't arrest someone for being overconfident or foolish."

At dusk, with his gear stowed in fore and aft compartments and an axe and a spare paddle lashed to his forward deck, Hadwin paddled out of Prince Rupert Harbour and directly into a storm. Weather reports for that night show waves over ten feet, winds gusting to forty miles an hour, and rain; the temperature was just above freezing, but the windchill factor would have driven it down to zero. Hadwin was not an experienced kayaker, but even if he had been, it was unlikely that he could survive a night in such weather—and yet, somehow, he did. At dawn, he found his way back to Prince Rupert. "He was waiting at the door when we opened," recalled Marilyn Baldwin, who co-owns SeaSport, where Hadwin had bought his kayak and equipment the previous day. Hadwin had returned to buy some warmer clothes and (on Constable Jeffrey's advice) emergency flares and a chart. When the topic of the tree came up, Baldwin recalled, "He wanted to argue. I think he wanted his day in court. He got very agitated; his muscles were vibrating like something taut, ready to snap."

Early on the morning of the thirteenth, with five days left to make his court date, Hadwin set off again. This time, he didn't come back.

When Margaret first heard that Grant was missing, she wasn't all that concerned; he had disappeared before, and he hadn't always been truthful about where he was going. The test

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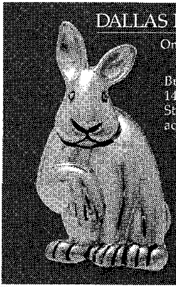

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would be whether he called his daughter on her birthday; when March 1st came and went with no phone call, Margaret began to fear the worst, and the Canadian Coast Guard began searching in earnest. No sign of him was found until four months later, in June, when large fragments of a kayak were discovered on an uninhabited island seventy miles north of Prince Rupert; the serial number matched that of the one Hadwin was known to have purchased. According to computer-generated scenarios, the boat could have drifted there from almost anywhere in Hecate Strait. This raises a host of possibilities, ranging from Hadwin's having capsized en route to Masset to the suggestion, by Blake Walkinshaw, a constable from Masset, that Hadwin "could have got a pumping" (been shot) out on the water; it is also conceivable that he was struck by another vessel—by accident, or intentionally. Equally plausible, though, is the theory that Hadwin paddled a short way up the wild, empty coast, gave his boat a push off the beach, and disappeared into the bush.

What is odd about the wreckage is that all the gear was in near-perfect condition. The fish biologist (and veteran beachcomber) who found it speculated that, based on its condition, the wreck was less than a month old. This complicates matters considerably, as does the fact that Hadwin charged three hundred dollars' worth of food on the day of his first departure. Corporal Gary Stroeder, the officer who was formerly in charge of the missing-person investigation on the Canadian side, is troubled by the location of Hadwin's axe. How, he wondered, did such a heavy object get above the high-tide line?

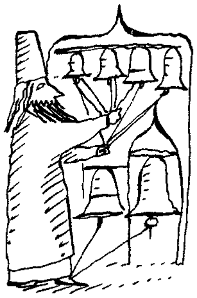
A number of alleged Hadwin sightings were made up and down the coast during the ensuing months, but none of them panned out, so rumors have filled the void: he was killed by Indians; he's doing time in the States for welfare fraud; he's running a trapline in Meziadin, British Columbia; he's in Siberia. Constable Walkinshaw believes that Hadwin could be alive: "The whole cop in me is saying there's something too neat about this." Constable Jeffrey, who has retired, thinks Hadwin drowned; Margaret Hadwin is trying to have her husband declared dead. But Corporal Stroeder isn't so sure. "If a coroner asked me to justify that he was dead, I wouldn't be able to," he told me, when we met in Prince Rupert. "There are too many loose ends."

One of them stretches all the way to California. Sometime during the Thanksgiving weekend of 2000, someone made a nearly fatal chainsaw cut in Luna, the massive California redwood made famous by the environmental activist Julia Butterfly Hill, who spent two years living in the tree's branches. As with the golden spruce, the cut did not fell the tree, but left it extremely vulnerable to high winds.

Port Clements, meanwhile, has suffered much; not only has the town lost its mascot (the tree is the centerpiece for the town logo) but, in November of the same year, its albino raven was electrocuted on a transformer. Yet the spruce may, in a sense, rise again; in 1997, eighty cuttings were taken from the tree as it lay dying by the Yakoun River. They were sent to a forestry-research station on Vancouver Island, where they were grafted to normal spruce seedlings and are now being held in trust for the Haida.

Last year, the Haida gave the town of Port Clements one of the grafts; it was planted in the town's millennium park, where it may be the safest tree in the Queen Charlottes. (The knee-high sapling is surrounded by a ten-foot chain-link fence topped with barbed wire.) Last June, in a private ceremony overseen by Haida elders, a second cutting was planted beside the stump of its parent tree. It is still green.

Meanwhile, Hadwin's case is still considered open by the Alaska State Troopers and the Mounties. No one has bothered to look for him in Siberia, but Cora Gray told me, "He talked about Russia a lot. He'd say, 'If I was going to choose a place to stay, it would be in Russia. Don't be surprised if you hear from me from there.' So now, when the phone rings late at night, I don't answer." ♦



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SHOUTS & MURMURS

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS TO THE ETHICIST

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

I was brought up in a Jewish home, but I haven't been observant in years. Last summer, in a rash moment, I said publicly that if Martha Stewart got indicted I would go back to the synagogue. Now that such an indictment seems likely, I am in a quandary. My older daughter believes that if Ms. Stewart goes to prison my obligations will include attending services regularly, maintaining a kosher home, and refraining from operating a motor vehicle on Shemini Atzereth. My younger daughter thinks that I might at least be able to get a waiver on that business about changing dishes for Passover. I want to keep my word, but I'm wondering whether a Friday-night service or two would do the trick.

C.T., New York City

My husband, who is an anti-abortion activist, sincerely believes that life begins at conception. Recently, he learned that he was conceived while his parents were on vacation in Jamaica, and he has come to the conclusion that he is therefore a Jamaican and is in this country illegally. He is now talking about turning himself in and having himself deported. Am I married to a man of principle or a cuckoo bird?

D.F., Tupelo, Miss.

I am an adviser to the President of a very powerful country. In order to divert attention from the economy, which happens to stink, I've advised him to talk about virtually nothing but war against Iraq between now and November, when our country is holding an important election. If the economy still stinks after a war with Iraq and I advise the President to talk about virtually nothing but war with North Korea until the next election, would I be "playing politics"?

K.R., Washington, D.C.

I am an entrepreneur whose business seriously needs the sort of intervention with the Customs Service only a high-ranking federal officeholder can provide. When I read about the gifts accepted by Senator Torricelli, I bought a home-entertainment center, intending to give it to him at an appropriate time. Now he has dropped out of the race. Would it still be ethical to deduct the home-entertainment center from my taxes? The picture on the television is excellent.

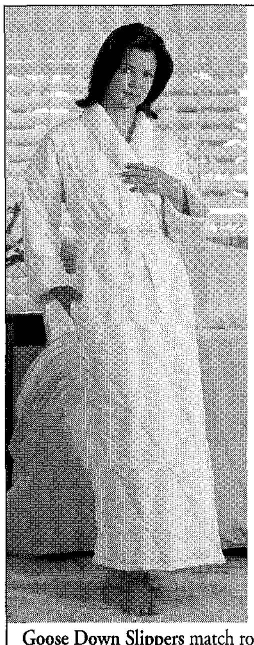
W.S., Short Hills, N.J.

For six years, I was the C.E.O. of a large conglomerate. Then, in 2000, there was a precipitous drop in the company's stock. Fortunately, by complete coincidence, I had sold eighty-seven million dollars' worth of shares the week before. For the final three years of my tenure, I had a compensation package that included one of those Jack Welch riders—I was entitled to any perk that Jack got. Now I find that Jack was getting free Yankees tickets and I wasn't. I'm planning to sue my old company for the cost of the tickets, although given the company's current financial situation—it's in Chapter 11—I might get only ten or fifteen cents on the dollar. My wife says that some people might consider the suit unseemly, with so many employees having lost their retirement money and all. But don't you think that fair's fair? The thought of Jack sitting in that box in Yankee Stadium just burns my ass.

B.P., Naples, Fla.

We are advisers to the President of a very powerful country, and we are prominent in a group of so-called hawks urging him to wage war on Iraq. Like every other member of the group, we evaded the war in Vietnam. Some people see an ethical problem in this; they refer to us as chicken hawks. But we figure that if we had gone to Vietnam we could have been killed, and then who would be here to urge the President to wage war on Iraq?

D.C., R.P., P.W., Washington, D.C. ♦



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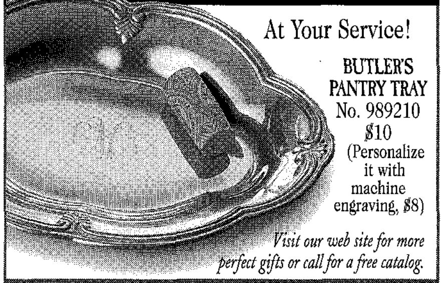

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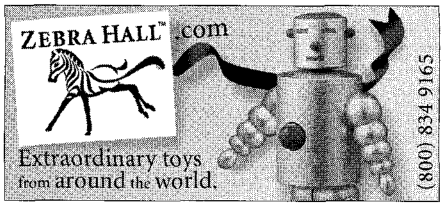

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ANNALS OF THEATRE

HOW TO BE A PRODUCER

An amateur from New Jersey goes to Broadway.

BY IAN PARKER

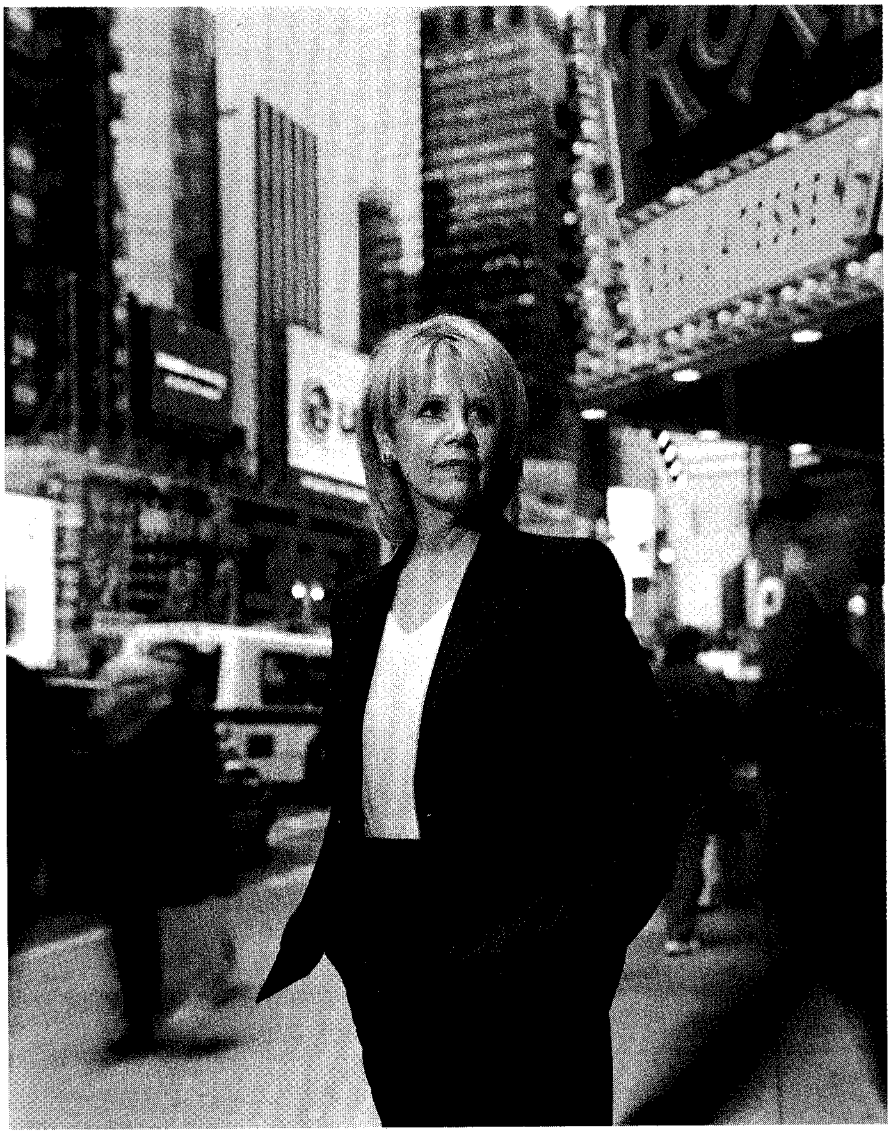
The morning after "The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?," by Edward Albee, opened in New York, the play's producers met with their advertising agents around a long table in an office above Times Square. If a production receives immediate critical applause, this kind of meeting is just "champagne and lolling about," as one of those present put it. But the reviews had been mixed, and the mood in the room was anxious and businesslike. For a while, nobody touched the small cake, decorated with an iced goat, on the center of the table.

Edward Albee sat at one end of the room. He said little, although on one occasion he dryly corrected someone's pronunciation of his name: "It's Awl-bee, not Al-bee." A handful of producers and advertising executives discussed radio spots and the best quotations to pull from that morning's reviews. (From the *Times:* "Four decades after 'Virginia Woolf' sent shock waves through the mainstream theater, Mr. Albee still asks questions that no other major American dramatist dares to ask" rather than "too much repetition of message-hammering speeches," from the same review.) When the discussion lost its way or got unruly, a producer named Daryl Roth, a slim, chic woman in her late fifties—looking like a European sovereign who had slipped away from bodyguards—restored order.

There are two kinds of theatrical producers. One is the super-investor, who puts enough money into a production (in this case, a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars) to earn "producer" billing on the poster and in the program, and who gets a moment at the podium if the play wins a Tony. This category was represented at the meeting by several quiet middle-aged men in good suits, as well as by a woman with bright-blond hair and an unnervingly dark tan, who had arrived in a fur coat. "I don't want to hear about family crises in the ads!" she said, in a loud, deep voice. "We all have enough of our own!" Later, she was struck by the idea that theatre tickets could be sold on what she called "the webnet." She seemed put out to learn that someone had already thought of this.

The other kind of theatrical producer is the working, or "lead," producer. "The Goat" had two of these: Daryl Roth and Elizabeth Ireland McCann. Usually, a play's lead producers have optioned the material and brought in most of the money (some of it their own, some from other investors). They promote and market a show and, once it has opened, capitalize on related opportunities—tours, amateur sales, television, film. It is also the job of lead producers to make sure that the investor-producers feel included in the process. So Daryl Roth took respectful note when the woman with the fur coat said, "Why don't we go on eBay?"

Daryl Roth began in this business relatively late in life, after many years as a wife and mother and part-time interior designer in northern New Jersey. But in her first fourteen years of producing she backed four plays that went on to win Pulitzer Prizes: "Three Tall Women," by Edward Albee; "How I Learned to Drive," by Paula Vogel;



Daryl Roth in Times Square. Photograph by Jessica Wynne.

“Wit,” by Margaret Edson; and “Proof,” last season’s hit by David Auburn. Thanks to this record, Roth became what one critic calls an “Off Broadway icon”; *Crain’s* put her on a list of the hundred most influential women in New York business. Vogel compares Roth with Lucille Lortel, the wealthy and adventurous producer and theatre owner—the “Queen of Off Broadway”—who died in 1999. As Roth’s friend the film and theatre producer Scott Rudin says, “Daryl believes in plays, and that puts her in a highly rarefied group. I think a lot of other people are looking for an angle, a promotional hook, a title. She believes in the well-made play, and she has a real appreciation of theatrical language. It’s always the unexpected thing that works, and she’s up for the unexpected.”

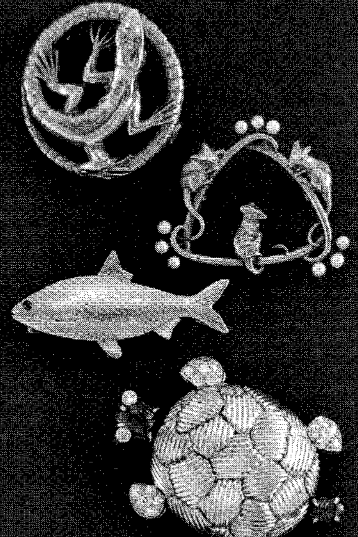
Roth’s office, an enclave of antique domestic furnishings in a modern midtown skyscraper, feels like the room marked “Study” in a rock star’s mansion. Several awards and nominations hang on the wall. There is a fine wooden desk that Roth calls “too pretty” to put a computer on, as well as scores of family photographs and a sofa with needlepoint cushions, including one that reads “If Life’s a Stage, I’d Like Better Lighting.” The walls are beige, and so are the carpets. Roth was wearing beige pants and a beige sweater that were roughly the same color as her skin and hair. She was visible only when she made sudden movements.

Roth was a little taken aback—but proud—to have just seen four adjacent advertisements in the *Times* for Broadway shows that she was co-producing. “I’m going to save that page, for when I feel depressed,” she said. Her voice has the clear, soothing tones of a yoga instructor’s, and there is the hint of a question mark at the end of most remarks. (“I’m optimistic to a point of absurdity?” she said.) The shows were “The Goat,” Charles Busch’s comedy “The Tale of the Allergist’s Wife,” the one-woman show “Bea Arthur on Broadway,” and “Proof,” which is still running after two years. There was also an ad for the peppy modern-circus entertainment “De La Guarda,” where a youngish student crowd, standing beneath sporadic artificial rain, watches performers swoop over their heads in harnesses; it is a long-standing tenant in the landmark building on Union Square which Roth bought in 1996 for around three million dollars—and which she named the Daryl Roth Theatre. “Everybody thought it was very presumptuous of me,” Roth said. “But when I’m dead I’ll be happy it’s there.”

Roth, who has begun to invest in movies, and who will produce a reading of “Oedipus Rex,” starring Al Pacino, next year, is wealthy enough to be able to follow her instincts. One of her virtues as a producer has been a talent for creating calm. Anna Deavere Smith, the writer and performer, says, “A ‘home-ness’ permeates everything she does. You know the restaurateur Alice Waters? She takes a tablecloth with her wherever she goes. There’s something like that about Daryl.”

Some people find Roth’s instincts a little too homey, especially in productions like “Bea Arthur on Broadway” and “The Tale of the Allergist’s Wife.” This is the Daryl Roth who puts her dogs’ names in the Playbills, who has paid to dedicate a bench to them in Central Park (“Leo and Lucy Roth, my wonderful and adoring pals, I love sharing the park with you”), and who calls her annual prize for theatre artists the Daryl Roth Creative Spirit Award. (“That sounds like a Hallmark greeting card to me,” another producer says.) Before each Tony Awards ceremony, Roth collects stones from the beach near her house in East Hampton, and writes “Peace,” “Joy,” and similar words on them with a gold Magic Marker and gives them to her collaborators to calm their nerves. This is the Roth who is drawn to plays that set up conflict between feelings (good) and thought (problematic)—between a woman’s life as wife, mother, daughter, hugger and her intellectual life—even though her own career is proof of how easily that supposed conflict can be set aside.

As an active theatrical producer, Roth’s job is to take care of her current investments and to find future investments. She makes backstage visits with well-timed gifts (including throat lozenges) for actors and keeps an eye on the number of audience members who, craning their necks in a room filled with noise and flashing lights, faint during “De La Guarda.” (This is not an uncommon occurrence.) In the days before we met, Roth had been lobbying to make changes to “The Goat” ’s ending, which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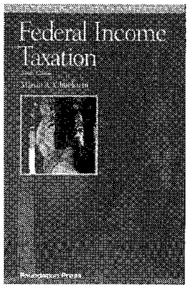
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"How do you get your children not to stick to the bottom of the cauldron?"

• •

is a bloody one, and she had also arranged for Twizzlers to be sold at the concession stand in her theatre. The day I was in her office, Roth and a colleague discussed the design of a promotional brochure for DR2, a new ninety-nine-seat theatre that Roth has created within the Daryl Roth Theatre. Roth looked at a prototype, then said gently, "Maybe turn the text horizontally," and "Looser, more loosey-goosey," and "Very pale green," until nothing of the old brochure remained.

Roth was also looking for new plays to produce. She had discussed her possible involvement in a children's musical based on Stuart Hample and Eric Marshall's best-selling book of cute quotations, "Children's Letters to God." ("It's so pure—little homilies to hang on to," Roth said.) She had talked with Scott Rudin about sharing the financial risk of a New York run of Joe Penhall's "Blue/Orange," a play about race and mental health, which had been a success in London. (In the end, she did not get involved in either of these projects.) Holly Hunter had visited the office to gauge Roth's interest in a New York production of a contemporary Irish drama in which Hunter might act. And at home on the Upper East Side, in a chair in her bedroom, where the light is good, Roth had read scripts sent by agents and writers. She receives five or six new plays a week. "I get a lot of issue-oriented plays," Roth said. "I'm getting more and more plays about sexual relations. I'm getting a lot of plays about families, a lot about dysfunctional families."

Roth made her name with work that resolves modern dysfunction. She is equally smart and sentimental, alert to human discomfort but instinctively optimistic, and she has supported literate contemporary plays—"accessible-serious plays," as her friend and fellow-producer Margo Lion puts it—that have stirred audiences without stripping them of hope. "For me, the theatre has always been a safe place to walk into and feel that, whatever happens in there, I'm either going to have a good emotional reaction or an intellectual reaction, and then I can walk out and it's O.K.," Roth said. "It's addressing a life issue with a safety net." With a few exceptions, including the work she has done with Albee, the plays that Roth has produced have had a fairly traditional structure, some serious subject matter (death, incest, mathematics), and strong women on a journey into self-knowledge, accommodation, and, in one case, outer space. In "Wit," which Roth vigorously championed three and a half years ago, an emotionally stunted academic exchanges bookishness for human warmth while dying of ovarian cancer. The play did not exactly imply that thinking causes cancer in women, but in "The Tale of the Allergist's Wife"—a comedy with faint thematic echoes of "Wit"—an Upper West Side woman learns that her intellectual pretensions are trumped by a husband's love.

Roth has backed a number of disappointments, including Jane Anderson's whimsical play about the Challenger space-shuttle disaster, "Defying Gravity." (Anderson once said of Roth that the play's reception "should have killed her.") But her personal taste seems to be peculiarly aligned with that of contemporary theatre audiences, in what have been boom years for plays touching on serious themes. "The mainstreaming of the good play is cyclical, and I think we're in a good cycle now," Roth told me. She was thinking of "Copenhagen," "The Invention of Love," and "The Crucible," as well as her own productions of "Proof" and "The Goat." In a way that is not true of all producers, Roth *is* her market: in the 2000-01 season, more than sixty per cent of Broadway ticket-buyers were women; eighty per cent were white, and nearly forty per cent were over fifty. Roth trusts her judgments, even those that leave her on the uptown side of arguments about, say, language and violence. Roth does not try to satisfy theatrical appetites that she herself does not have—for the wildly avant-garde or for ten-million-dollar mass-market extravaganzas. When we spoke in her office, Roth acknowledged that she might have passed on a play as gory as "King Lear." She also said, "I mean, I don't mind—pardon me—a good 'fuck' or a good 'shit' every now and again, but if it's all about the language . . . " Her son, Jordan Roth, who is twenty-six and also a producer, said, "She's so connected to her audience. Things that are off-putting to her will invariably be off-putting to the audience she is selling to." Rocco Landesman, the Broadway producer whose hits include "The Producers" and "The Sound of Music," says, "The most successful producers have been those, like Cameron Mackintosh"—the producer of "Cats," among many other musicals—"whose own tastes have reflected a wide popular taste. You have to have a taste that is not too esoteric but still have the intelligence to be able to discern quality.

Daryl's taste is not middlebrow—she's a very bright, well-educated person—but I think she's fortunate in that her tastes are often going to be reflected in popular success."

I asked Roth to describe some of the plays that she had recently declined to support. One was a romantic story with a backdrop of the terrorist attacks of September 11th. ("It's too early for me," she said.) Another "was just not well written—it was not interesting writing." There was a relationship story "that felt very 'first play.' It was about a young couple and their . . . process." She laughed. "Coming together and going apart again, nothing groundbreaking." And the last was about a woman "going through and coming out of the throes of alcoholism." Roth went on, "It was about a woman, my contemporary—I could connect to her and her issues. But I decided in the end I don't want to put a play out there about alcoholism. I wasn't sure where the redemption was for people who would come to see it." She smiled. "I get sent a lot of plays that are serious and intense. I want to do serious things, but I don't want to be gloomy at this time."

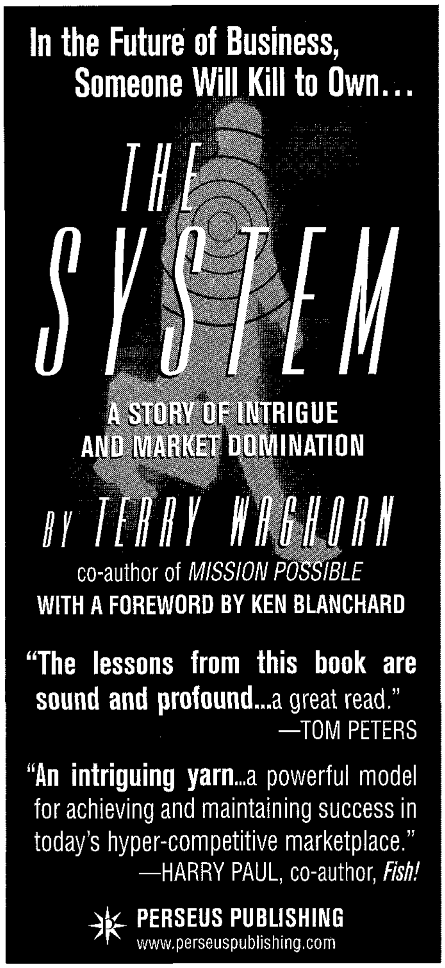
Roth entered one of the few serious professions that can be started, in an instant, with a checkbook. But the very attribute that made it possible for her to step straight into the business—great personal wealth—was also a challenge to her credibility. As Roth's friend the actress Marian Seldes says, "If you have money, people doubt your talent. It's like a beautiful girl. You think, Does she have any brains?"

"I didn't realize that people would not take me seriously," Roth says. "There was a feeling of 'Oh, she hasn't worked in theatre all her life. Who is she? Where did she come from?' "

She was the wife of a multimillionaire, and had grown up in the suburbs, where she was the captain of a high-school flag-twirling team, in what she describes as a happy, "moral," Conservative Jewish family. Her late father was a successful Chevrolet dealer in Wayne, New Jersey, and her mother stayed at home. She has one sister, Dale Atkins, who has also built a career around dysfunction: she is a psychologist specializing in family issues who sometimes appears on the "Today" show. According to Atkins, the young Daryl "was a trend-setter" and had the best-looking boyfriends at Wayne High School. Roth says that she was "integrated into my life as a suburban kid," but she was also aware of what was happening in the city. "My parents were very culturally oriented. They took us to ballet and concerts and theatre in New York, and when I was old enough I would get on the bus and come to New York on my own and see a show." In the mid-sixties, she attended Syracuse University and N.Y.U., majoring in art history; after graduating, in 1966, she worked for *Seventeen*, writing and editing promotional fashion copy. In 1969, she married Steven Roth, a real-estate developer, at the Pierre Hotel. After the birth of their daughter, Amanda, in 1971, the family moved to northern New Jersey; four years later, their son, Jordan, was born.

Daryl Roth describes her husband as "street-smart" and "a tough businessman, a man of few, well-chosen words." When they married, Steven Roth had just started his own real-estate company and was not yet wealthy; he went on to build a series of strip malls in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, and in the nineteen-nineties, as the C.E.O. and chairman of Vornado Realty, he invaded the Manhattan property market. Today, he is the largest commercial landlord in the city (he owns about fourteen million square feet of office space); in the spring of 2001, he came close to buying the World Trade Center. He is known as a ferociously unyielding negotiator. "Steve views every negotiation as the end of the world," a competitor says.

As her husband's empire grew, Roth stayed home, first in Saddle River, then in Ridgewood, in a Tudor-style house with a pool, in a sidewalk community of doctors and Wall Street traders. She felt she had a foot in two generations. "Being with my kids was my priority," she said. "But I also wanted to keep excited and busy and interested—keep my hand in something." One day in the mid-seventies, she had guests at her house who admired her taste so much that they asked for her help designing the interior of their new medical practice. This venture was a success, and for the next ten years—during an era of giant Jacuzzis—Roth ran a part-time


In the Future of Business, Someone Will Kill to Own...

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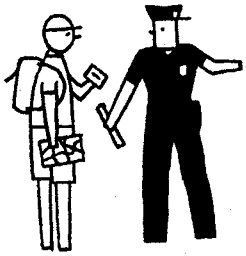
business in interior design, and made a reputation for softening and domesticating commercial space. "These were the days when if you had some money you wanted to show it in everything that there was, everywhere in your house," she said. "Everybody was putting lots of stuff in and I was good at taking it out, and saying, 'This would be calmer,' 'This would be very functional,' 'This would be more peaceful—why don't we do gray and beige instead of green and red?' "

Roth enjoyed her business. "I was never bored, never," she says. "But the designing wasn't fulfilling for me." Looking at her neighbors, she could see the dangers of an understimulated life. "I kept thinking and rethinking—you know, people get you to do these visualizations—Where do I see myself being the most fulfilled and the happiest? And the thing that I'd always loved in my life was theatre." In 1987, her friend Howard Squadron, a lawyer and a former president of the American Jewish Congress, who died earlier this year, invited her to sit with him on the board of City Center, the dance venue, and Roth took it as an opportunity to educate herself in the workings of New York theatre. She met writers and directors and began attending producers' readings. For six months, she looked for a play to produce. And in 1988, at the age of forty-three, with the financial backing of her family and friends, she became a producer for the first time, investing about seventy per cent of the capital for "Closer Than Ever," an Off Broadway revue of cabaret songs by David Shire and Richard Maltby, Jr. Roth was exhilarated. She went on to produce Jane Anderson's "The Baby Dance," a play about adoption, and to put half a million dollars (a hundred thousand dollars of which was her own, the rest contributed by other investors) into the $4.3 million Broadway show "Nick and Nora." The show—based on characters from "The Thin Man"—flopped, and the experience taught Roth that, for the moment, she would be happier in smaller, Off Broadway settings, where she could watch over a company and make a production her own.

In the early nineties, the Roths left Ridgewood and moved back into the city, to the Upper East Side. (They also had the house in East Hampton.) Roth produced "Shmulnik's Waltz," a romantic comedy, with music, again, by David Shire. At the time, Roth was still aware of "not being considered a recognized player." As her son Jordan says, "There was a leeriness—you see a woman, a mother, a successful husband, and you assume you know what she can and cannot do." The producer Elizabeth McCann, who has worked in the theatre all of her adult life, remembers that "Daryl was obviously a woman who hadn't really been in the workplace. She had been in New Jersey, taking care of her family. You wondered if she was going to be in it for the long haul. You know, a lot of people come along, put some money into the theatre, and then go on to something else." McCann adds, "Daryl did a few very little things. It was hard to define her taste. It seemed a little parochial. 'Shmulnik's Waltz' was a sweet Jewish musical. It didn't really have the pizzazz to reach a larger audience. And then I think she developed her own taste and her own signature and her own confidence."

Roth acknowledges some early timidity. Her great regret is that she did not fight for a piece of the New York production of Tony Kushner's "Angels in America." In 1992, after seeing the play at the National Theatre in London, she called Kushner's agent to say that it was "the most extraordinary piece of theatre I've ever seen," but she did not present herself as a potential producer. "It was the beginning of my career," she said. "If I'd had more confidence, I would have grabbed it. That's the one thing I've seen over all these years that I wish my name were on."

Two years later, Roth forced herself to act when she saw a noncommercial production of "Three Tall Women," by Edward Albee, whose reputation was then in a relative slump. "I remember thinking, I really need to be a part of it," she says. The play is a conversation among three women—the same woman at three points in her life. "I was totally absorbed, blown away," Roth said. It had already been optioned for a commercial run by Elizabeth McCann. Roth wanted to co-produce, but it took nerve for her to make the call. "I wasn't used to saying, 'Can I join you?' " As it turned out, McCann was glad to share the risk with Roth and her investors. And Roth had made a discovery: "I saw this is how you have to be—if you see something you want to be involved with, you have to go after it. This is how this business is. It seemed a very obvious revelation."



The director of "Three Tall Women," Lawrence Sacharow, immediately recognized Roth as "one of the new breed of producers. . . . Liz McCann's the same—they're collaborators, they're part of the team, they're not producing plays only to make money. They're not just saying, 'We've got a play, we'll cast a star, we'll try it out in Boston and then bring it to New York and all get rich.' "

Late last year, Roth was sent a play by Arthur Laurents, the eighty-four-year-old author of "West Side Story," "Gypsy," "Invitation to a March," and "Nick and Nora." In the new play, "Attacks on the Heart," a middle-aged American man and an Islamic Turkish woman with terrorist connections meet in a café, fall in love, and then find their love tested by the events of September 11th. This was the play that Roth thought was "too early"; she had said the same to Laurents's agent, in a polite note written immediately after reading it.

But Roth was then invited to a private reading of "Attacks on the Heart," and despite her earlier misgivings she decided to attend. The play now had a new attraction: Ed Harris would be reading, and might be available for a future production. She was driven by chauffeur to a midtown rehearsal room of the Manhattan Theatre Club, a noncommercial theatre company. Forty or so people sat in stackable chairs in uneven rows. According to Arthur Laurents, there were five real players in the room—Roth was one, another was the leading British producer Robert Fox. The rest of the audience was made up of agents, actors, and Manhattan Theatre Club staff. Laurents sat in the middle of the front row, a few feet from the two actors, Ed Harris—wearing a beard, a black shirt, black pants, and glasses—and the Turkish actress Cigdem Onat. They began to read. Arthur Laurents rotated his thumbs very slowly, and nodded along to the rhythm of the sentences. Daryl Roth sat upright, her hands under her thighs. As the play moved into a slow second hour, two senior people at the Manhattan Theatre Club passed handwritten notes back and forth about each other's clothes—"New shoes?"—and tried to hide smiles.

Afterward, at lunch, I asked Roth if she was interested in funding a production of "Attacks on the Heart," perhaps after a run at the Manhattan Theatre Club. "I don't know, I don't know," she said. "The Ed Harris connection and the Arthur Laurents connection are pretty spectacular, but I think the play needs more development." She was still doubtful about some of the September 11th material, but, she said, "When it's a setup between two people of a certain age, there's always something very tender about that. You know, 'Is there another chance in somebody's life to find love?' It's a simple story." She added, smiling, "And it's very appealing to people of the age of those who go to the theatre."

"Three Tall Women," which Roth produced in 1994, was a surprising commercial hit. ("We're getting a better return from 'Three Tall Women' than from my shopping centers," Steven Roth told a reporter at the time.) The play revived Albee's reputation and began Roth's run of Pulitzer winners. Other successes included Albee's "The Play About the Baby" and "The Bomb-itty of Errors," a rap take on "The Comedy of Errors," which Roth first saw as an N.Y.U. senior project. She recognized it as "a marketing challenge." She explained, "If you really like Shakespeare, you probably won't like it in rap, and if you really like rap you probably don't want to hear Shakespeare." "The Bomb-itty of Errors" opened in December, 1999, was praised by critics, had a six-month run, and has been developed into an MTV comedy series. Roth, who has immaculate manners and notices the manners of others, told me, brightly, that the show's creators "would love to think someone else would have discovered them the next day. I hope they understand that they were really lucky! And I hope . . . they don't forget that they missed the entire actor-being-waiter stage of their career."

Roth says that, over the course of her career, she has probably broken even, but she has always been free to fail. "There are people who are much better than I at being able to find material that will work commercially. That's not my strong suit at all. A lot of very smart producers who passed on 'Wit,' say, probably did so for very good reasons. They need to make sure that a play at least has a chance of commercial success. That's not on my agenda. I don't have to think about making a living to feed my children, so my priority is the material." She claims only to ask herself, "Does it push any buttons? Is it exciting? Is it deep? Is it emotional? Is it beautifully written? Do I care about the people?" (And, to a lesser extent, is Ed Harris on board?)

Roth can imagine the person she did not become. "I would have been on the other side of the window, peering in, wanting to be on the inside." Instead, she has helped produce plays like "The Goat," which won a Tony Award in June. Despite a great love of animals and a dislike of onstage profanity, she has financed a play in which, early on, someone shouts, "You're fucking a fucking goat and you're telling me not to swear?" (A fellow-producer said, "Daryl admitted to me she would not have set out to develop a play with these . . . issues.") Roth, genuinely taken by the quality of the writing and the deft representation of a family under stress, was able to look past the goat. At the first preview, she sat with her hands on her lap, listening not to the lines but to the audience's response. At the end—the play does not have a happy ending in any traditional sense—Roth said, "I think there's forgiveness . . . maybe," and she laughed at her own hunger for optimism.

On a recent Saturday evening, Roth and I went to the Daryl Roth Theatre, on Union Square, to a performance of "De La Guarda." Roth, who was seeing the show for perhaps the thirtieth time, took my hand to lead me, in the dark, through the audience. She found a spot and stood in the artificial rain, in beautiful clothes, and—looking out of place and quite at home—clapped along to the music, and continued clapping long after others had stopped. ♦

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REFLECTIONS

A NATURAL HISTORY OF DESTRUCTION

BY W. G. SEBALD

I grew up with the feeling that something was being kept from me: at home, at school, and by the German writers whose books I read hoping to glean more information about the monstrous events in the background of my own life.

I spent my childhood and youth on the northern outskirts of the Bavarian Alps, in a region that was largely spared the direct effects of the so-called hostilities. At the end of the war, I was just a year old, so I can hardly have any impressions of that period of destruction based on personal experience. Yet, to this day, when I see photographs or documentary films dating from the war I feel as if I were its child, so to speak, as if those horrors I did not experience cast a shadow over me, one from which I shall never entirely emerge. A book published in 1963 on the history of the little market town of Sonthofen, where we lived, contains a passage that runs, "The war took much from us, but our beautiful native landscape was left untouched, as flourishing as ever." Reading that sentence, I see pictures merging before my mind's eye: paths through the fields, river meadows, and mountain pastures mingling with images of destruction—and, oddly, it is the latter, not the now entirely unreal idylls of my early childhood, that make me feel as if I were coming home, perhaps because they represent the more powerful and dominant reality of my first years of life. I know now that at the time, when I was lying in my bassinet on the balcony of our house and looking up at the pale-blue sky, there was a pall of smoke over all Europe, over the rearguard actions in the East and the West, over the ruins of the German cities, over the camps where untold numbers of people were burned: people from Berlin and Frankfurt, from Wuppertal and Vienna, from Würzburg and Bad Kissingen, from Hilversum and The Hague, Namur and Thionville, Lyons and Bordeaux, Kraków and Lodz, Szeged and Sarajevo, Salonika and Rhodes, Ferrara and Venice—there was scarcely a place in Europe from which no one had been deported to death in those years. I have seen memorial tablets even in the most remote villages on the island of Corsica reading "Morte à Auschwitz," or "Tué par les Allemands, Flossenburg 1944."

In one of my narratives, I described how, in 1952, when I moved with my parents and siblings from my birthplace of Wertach to Sonthofen, twelve miles away, nothing seemed as fascinating as the areas of wasteland here and there among the rows of houses. On February 22 and April 29, 1945, bombs had been dropped on the insignificant little market town, probably because the place contained two large barracks for the mountain troops and the artillery, as well as an establishment known as the Ordensburg, one of four training colleges that had been set up for the education of the new Fascist élite soon after the Nazis came to power.

Of the buildings destroyed in Sonthofen and not rebuilt, I remember two in particular. One was the railway station, the main part of which was used as a storehouse for rolls of cable, telegraph poles, and similar items, while in a largely undamaged annex Gogl the music teacher gave lessons every evening. It was strange, especially in winter, to see the music pupils scraping away with their bows at their violas and cellos in the one lighted room of the ruined building, as if they were sitting on a raft drifting away into the darkness. The other building was known as the Herz-Schloss: a villa built at the turn of the century close to the Protestant church. Nothing was left of it now but its cast-iron garden railings and the cellars. By the nineteen-fifties, the plot of land, where a few handsome trees had survived the catastrophe, was entirely overgrown, and as children we often spent whole afternoons in this wilderness created in the middle of town by the war. I remember that I never felt at ease going down the steps to the cellars. They smelled of damp and decay, and I always feared that I might bump into the body of an animal or a human corpse.

Refugees making their way through Hamburg.

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Today, it is hard to form an even partly adequate idea of the extent of the devastation suffered by the cities of Germany in the last years of the Second World War, harder still to think about the horrors involved in that dev-

Janet Flanner described the "dwindled population in black and with bundles—the silent German people appropriate to the silent city."

astation. It is true that the strategic-bombing surveys published by the Allies, together with the records of the Federal German Statistics Office and other official sources, show that the Royal Air Force alone dropped almost a million tons of bombs on enemy territory; it is true that of the hundred and thirty-one towns and cities attacked, some only once and some repeatedly, many were almost entirely flattened, that about six hundred thousand German civilians fell victim to the air raids and three and a half million homes were destroyed, that at the end of the war seven and a half million people were left homeless, and there were 31.1 cubic metres of rubble for every inhabitant of Cologne and 42.8 cubic metres for every inhabitant of Dresden—but we do not grasp what it all actually meant. The destruction, on a scale without historical precedent, entered the annals of the nation only in the form of vague generalizations as Germany set about rebuilding itself. It seems to have left scarcely a trace of pain behind in the collective consciousness, it has been largely obliterated from the retrospective understanding of those affected, and it never played any appreciable part in discussions about our country. This is highly paradoxical in view of the large numbers of people exposed to the air campaign day after day, month after month, year after year, and the length of time—well into the postwar period—during which they faced its real consequences, which might have been expected to stifle any positive attitude to life. Even after 1950, wooden crosses still stood on the piles of rubble in towns like Pforzheim, which lost almost a quarter of its eighty thousand inhabitants in a single raid on the night of February 23, 1945, and no doubt the dreadful smells that, as Janet Flanner wrote in March, 1947, were released by the yawning cellars of Warsaw in the first warm days of spring pervaded the German cities, too, in

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Leo Cullum

"Everything about the car business has changed, Jim—except my jacket."

the immediate postwar period. But these things apparently did not register on the sensory experience of the survivors still living at the scene of the catastrophe. People walked "down the street, through the dreadful ruins," the novelist Alfred Döblin wrote in 1945, after returning from American exile to southwest Germany, "as if nothing had happened, and . . . the town had always looked like that." The reverse side of such apathy was the declaration of a new beginning, the unquestioning heroism with which people immediately set about the task of clearance and reorganization.

Writing of a conversation with the directors of I.G. Farben in Frankfurt in April, 1945, the journalist and diplomat Robert Thompson Pell records the amazement with which he heard Germans talk of rebuilding their country to be "greater and stronger than ever before"—in a tone in which self-pity, grovelling self-justification, a sense of injured innocence, and defiance were curiously intermingled. Nor did they subsequently fail to carry out that intention, as witness the postcards that travellers in Germany can buy today at the newsstands of Frankfurt am Main. From the outset, the now legendary—and in some respects genuinely admirable—reconstruction of the country after the devastation wrought by Germany's wartime enemies, a reconstruction tantamount to a second liquidation, in successive phases, of the nation's past, prohibited any look backward. It did so through the sheer amount of labor required and the creation of a new, faceless reality, pointing the population exclusively toward the future and enjoining on it silence about the past. German accounts of the time are so few and far between that Hans Magnus Enzensberger's collection "Europa in Ruinen" ("Europe in Ruins"), published in 1990, consists predominantly of pieces by foreign journalists and writers making observations that until then had been almost completely ignored in Germany.

Even what has been called the "literature of the ruins," which would seem to presuppose an unerring sense of reality and a concern, as Heinrich Böll put it, with "what we found when we came home," proves on closer inspection to be an instrument already tuned to individual and collective amnesia, and probably influenced by pre-conscious self-censorship—a means of obscuring a world that could no longer be presented in comprehensible terms. There was tacit agreement, equally binding on everyone, that the true state of material and moral ruin in which the country found itself was not to be described. The darkest aspects of the final act of destruction, as experienced by the great majority of the German population, remained under a kind of taboo, like a shameful family secret—a secret that perhaps could not be acknowledged even privately.

Of all the literary works written at the end of the nineteen-forties, probably only Böll's "Der Engel Schweig" ("The Angel Was Silent") gives some idea of the depths of horror then threatening to overwhelm any who really looked at the ruins around them. Reading it, one is immediately aware that, of all novels, this—a tale that seems marked by irremediable gloom—was more than readers of the time could be expected to take, as Böll's publishers and probably Böll himself thought. As a result, it was not published until 1992, more than forty years after it was written. Indeed, the seventeenth chapter, relating the death throes of Frau Gompertz, is so unremittingly sombre that even today it makes painful reading. The dark, stickily clotting blood described as it pours from the dying woman's mouth in floods and spasms, spreading over her chest, staining the sheets, dripping over the edge of the bed to the floor and forming a glutinous puddle—inky and, as Böll is at pains to emphasize, extremely black-hued blood—symbolizes the despair that militates against the will to survive, the bleak depression that refuses to lift and to which the Germans might have been expected to succumb.

Apart from Heinrich Böll, only a few other writers—among them Hans Erich Nossack, the author of "Der Untergang" ("The End")—ventured to break the taboo on any mention of the inward and outward destruction, and generally did so rather equivocally. Even in later years, when local and amateur war historians began documenting the fall of the German cities, their studies did not alter the fact that the images of this horrifying chapter of our history have never really crossed the threshold of the national consciousness. They did not try to provide a clearer understanding of the extraordinary faculty for self-anesthesia shown by a community that seemed to have emerged from a war of annihilation without any signs of psychological impairment.

Enzensberger points out that it is impossible to understand "the mysterious energy of the Germans" without recognizing that "insensibility was the condition of their success." The prerequisites of the German economic miracle were not only the enormous sums invested in the country under the Marshall Plan, the outbreak of the Cold War, and the scrapping of outdated industrial complexes—an operation performed with brutal efficiency by the bomber squadrons—but also something less often acknowledged: the unquestioning work ethic learned in a totalitarian society, the logistical capacity for improvisation shown by an economy under constant threat, experience in the use of "foreign labor forces," and the lifting of the heavy burden of history that went up in flames between 1942 and 1945.

The plan for an all-out bombing campaign, which had been supported by groups within the Royal Air Force since 1940, came into effect in February, 1942, with the deployment of huge quantities of personnel and war materials. As far as I know, the question of whether and how it could be strategically or morally justified was never the subject of open debate in Germany after 1945, no doubt mainly because a nation that had murdered and worked to death millions of people in camps could hardly call on the victorious powers to explain the military and political logic that dictated the destruction of the German cities. It is also possible, as sources like "The End," Nossack's account of the destruction of Hamburg, indicate, that quite a number of those affected by the air raids, despite their grim but impotent fury in the face of such obvious madness, regarded the great firestorms as a just punishment, even an act of retribution on the part of a higher power with whom there could be no dispute. Apart from the reports of the Nazi press and the Reich broadcasting service, which always spoke in the same tone of "sadistic terrorist attacks" and "barbaric gangsters of the air," protests against the long campaign of destruction conducted by the Allies seem to have been few and far between. According to several accounts, the Germans faced the catastrophe that was taking place with silent fascination. "This was not the time," Nossack writes, "to draw such petty distinctions as the difference between friend and foe."

But, in contrast to the mainly passive reaction of the Germans to the loss of their cities, which they perceived as an inescapable calamity, the program of destruction directed primarily against the civilian population was vigorously debated from the first in Great Britain. The ambivalence was even more pronounced after Germany's unconditional surrender. As accounts and pictures of the effects of area bombing began appearing in England, there was a growing sense of revulsion against damage that had been, so to speak, indiscriminately inflicted. "In the safety of peace," the historian and newspaper editor Max Hastings wrote, "the bombers' part in the war was one that many politicians and civilians would prefer to forget."

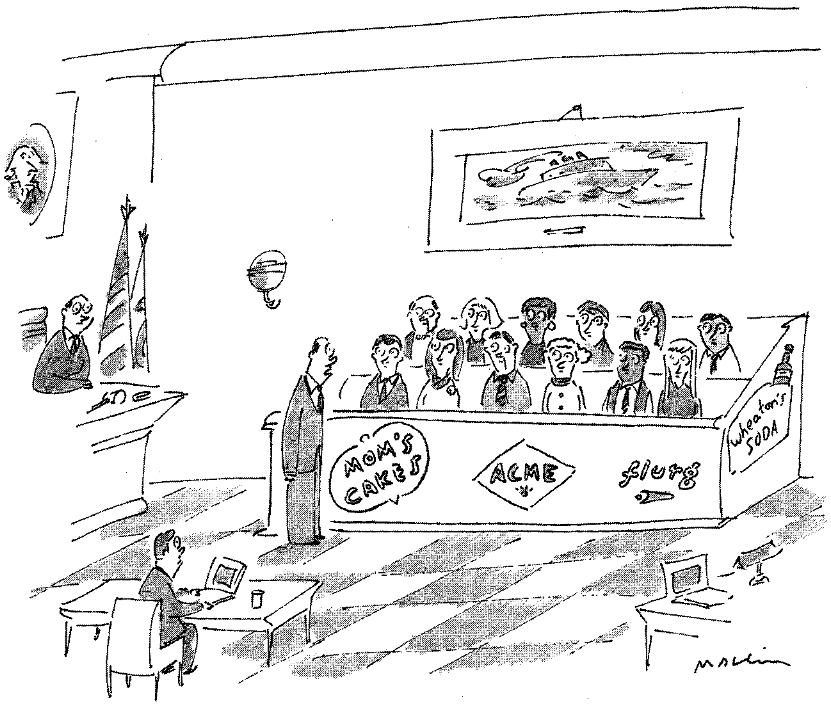
The origin of the area-bombing strategy lay in the extremely tenuous position of Great Britain in 1941. Germany was at the height of its power; its armies had conquered the entire continent of Europe and were about to advance further into Africa and Asia, and the British were simply left to their insular fate. Churchill, with this prospect before him, had written to Lord Beaverbrook that there was only one way to force Hitler back to confrontation, "and that is an absolutely devastating exterminating attack by very heavy bombers from this country upon the Nazi homeland." Admittedly, the prerequisites for such an operation were far from present at the time. The British production capacity was inadequate, there were not enough airfields, training programs for bomber crews were in short supply, and so were effective explosives, new navigational systems, and almost any kind of useful experience. But area bombing was a strategy that was comprehensible and, notwithstanding its small degree of accuracy in hitting a target, allowed a kind of movable front line to be drawn the length and breadth of enemy territory, and it was sanctioned by the governmental decision of February, 1942, "to destroy the morale of the enemy civilian population and, in particular, of the industrial workers."

This directive did not, as is frequently claimed, spring from a wish to bring the war to a speedy conclusion; it was the only way of intervening in the war at all. The criticism later levelled at the ruthless pursuit of such a program of destruction (partly in view of the Allies' own casualties) concentrated chiefly on the fact that it was sustained even when selective attacks could be made from the air, with far greater precision, on targets like ball-bearing factories, oil and fuel installations, railway junctions, and the main transport arteries—operations that, as Albert Speer commented in his memoirs, would very soon have paralyzed the entire system of production. Critics of the bombing offensive also pointed out that, even in the spring of 1944, it was emerging that, despite incessant air raids, the morale of the German population was unbroken, while industrial production was impaired only marginally at best, and the end of the war had not come a day closer. I believe that if, nonetheless, the strategic aims of the offensive were not modified, and the bomber crews, many of them boys who had only just left school, were still exposed to a game of Russian roulette costing sixty out of a hundred of them their lives, it was for reasons largely ignored in the official histories. One was that an enterprise of the material and organizational dimensions of the bombing offensive, which by A. J. P. Taylor's estimate swallowed up a third of Britain's war effort, had such a momentum of its own that short-term corrections of course and restrictions were more or less ruled out, especially at a time when, after three years of intensive expansion of factories and production plants, that enterprise had reached the peak of its development. Once the material was manufactured, simply letting the aircraft and their valuable freight stand idle on the airfields of eastern England ran counter to any healthy economic instinct.

A conclusive factor in deciding to continue the offensive was probably the propaganda value, essential for bolstering British morale, of the daily reports in British newspapers of systematic destruction at a time when all other contact with the enemy on the continent had been cut off. For these reasons, there can hardly have been any question of sacking Sir Arthur (Bomber) Harris, commander-in-chief of Bomber Command, who inflexibly supported his strategy even when it was obviously not working. Although Churchill on various occasions expressed scruples about the bombardment of cities, he consoled himself, under the influence of Harris, with the idea that there was, as he put it, a higher poetic justice at work, and that "those who have loosed these horrors upon mankind will now in their homes and persons feel the shattering strokes of just retribution." In fact, there is much to suggest that, in Harris, a man had risen to the head of Bomber Command who, according to the scientist and military adviser Solly Zuckerman, liked destruction for its own sake, and was thus in perfect sympathy with the innermost principle of every war, which is to aim for as wholesale an annihilation of the enemy, with his dwellings, his history, and his natural environment, as can possibly be achieved. Elias Canetti has linked the fascination of power in its purest form to the growing number of its accumulated victims. In line with this idea, Sir Arthur Harris's position was unassailable *because* of his unlimited interest in destruction. His plan for successive devastating strikes, which he followed uncompromisingly to the end, was overwhelmingly simple in its logic, and, by comparison, any real strategic alternatives such as disabling the fuel supply were bound to look like mere diversionary tactics. The war in the air was war pure and undisguised.

In midsummer of 1943, during a long heat wave, the R.A.F., supported by the United States Eighth Army Air Force, flew a series of raids on Hamburg. The aim of Operation Gomorrah, as it was called, was to destroy the city and reduce it to ashes. In a raid early on the morning of July 28th, beginning at one o'clock, thousands of tons of high-explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped on the densely populated residential area north of the Elbe. A now familiar sequence of events occurred: first, all the doors and windows were torn from their frames and smashed by high-explosive bombs weighing four thousand pounds, then the attic floors of the buildings were ignited by lightweight incendiary mixtures, and, at the same time, fire bombs weighing as much as thirty pounds fell into the lower stories. Within a few minutes, huge fires were burning across the bombed area, which covered some eight square miles, and they merged so rapidly that, only a quarter of an hour after the first bombs had dropped, the whole airspace was a sea of flames as far as the eye could see. Five minutes later, at 1:20 A.M., a firestorm arose of an intensity that no one would ever before have thought possible. Reaching more than a mile into the sky, it snatched oxygen to itself so violently that the air currents reached hurricane force, resonating like mighty organs with all the stops pulled out at once.

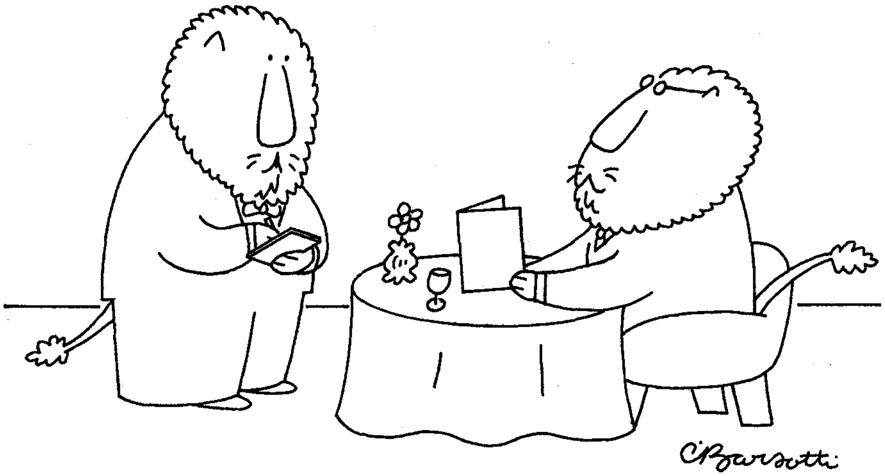
The fire burned like this for three hours. At its height, the storm lifted gables and roofs from buildings, flung rafters and entire advertising kiosks through the air, tore trees from the ground, and drove human beings before it like living torches. Behind collapsing façades, the flames shot up as high as houses, rolled like a tidal wave through the streets at a speed of more than ninety miles an hour, spun across open squares in strange rhythms, like spinning cylinders of fire. The water in some of the canals was ablaze. The glass in the tramcar windows melted; stocks of sugar boiled in the bakery cellars. Those who had fled from their air-raid shelters sank, in grotesque contortions, in the thick bubbles thrown up by melting asphalt. No one knows for certain how many lost their lives that night, or how many went mad before they died. When day broke, the summer dawn could not penetrate the leaden gloom above the city. The smoke had risen to a height of five miles, where it spread like a vast, anvil-shaped cumulonimbus cloud. A wavering heat, which the bomber pilots said they had felt through the sides of their planes, continued to rise from the smoking, glowing mounds of stone. Residential districts whose street lengths totalled a hundred and twenty miles were utterly destroyed. Horribly disfigured corpses



"*Ladies, gentlemen, and corporate sponsors of the jury.*"

lay everywhere. Bluish little phosphorus flames still flickered around many of them; others had been roasted brown or purple and reduced to a third of their normal size. They lay doubled up in pools of their own melted fat, which had sometimes already congealed. The central death zone was declared a no-go area in the next few days. When labor gangs of prisoners and camp inmates could begin clearing it, in August, after the rubble had cooled down, they found people still sitting at the tables where they had been overcome by carbon monoxide.

Elsewhere, clumps of flesh and bone or whole heaps of bodies had cooked in the water gushing from bursting boilers. Other victims had been so badly charred and reduced to ashes by the heat, which had risen to a thousand degrees or more, that the remains of families consisting of several people could be carried away in a single laundry basket.



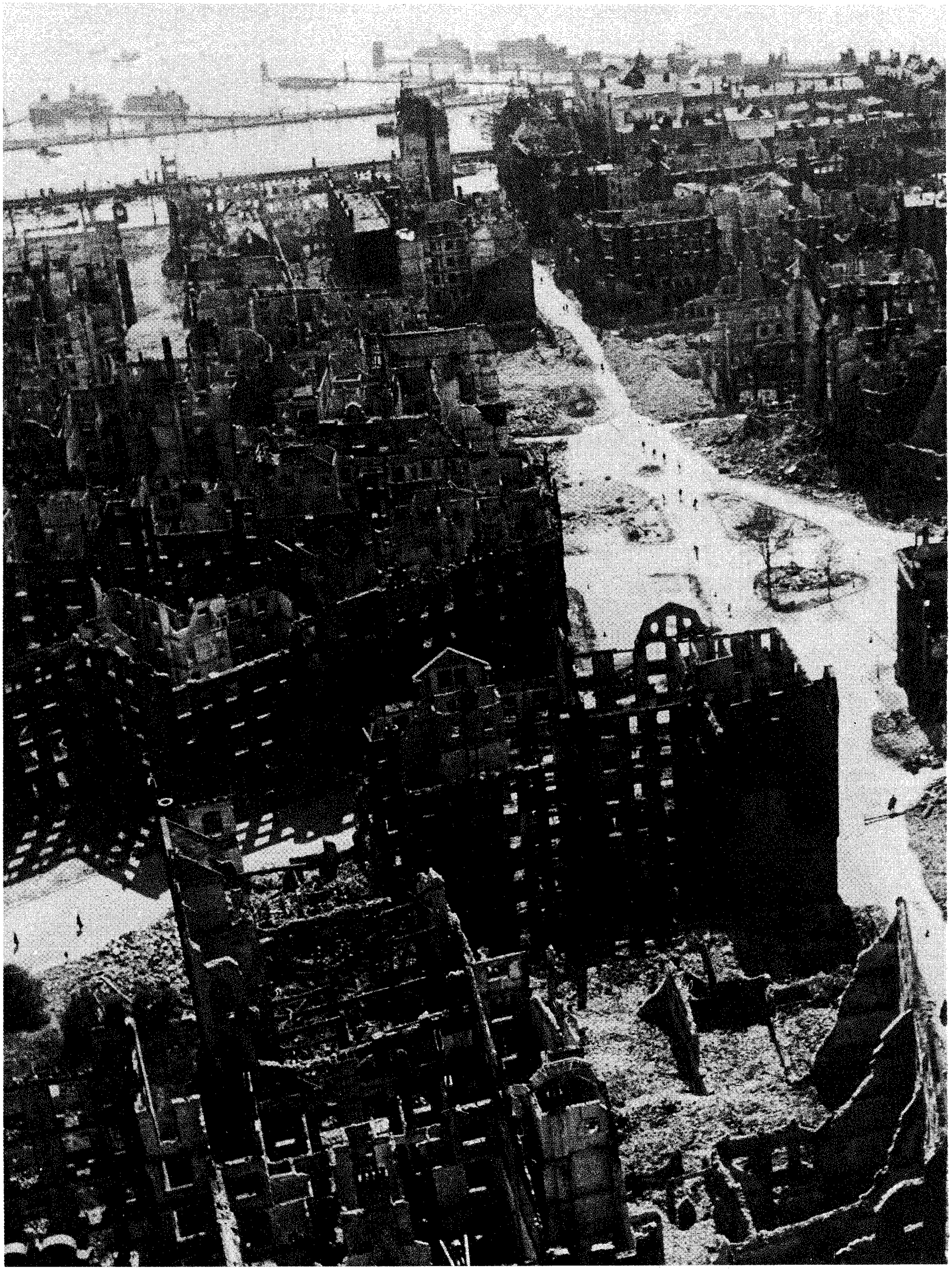
"For the health-conscious, we suggest you chase your own zebra."

The exodus of survivors from Hamburg had begun on the night of the air raid itself. It started, as Nossack writes in "The End," with "constant movement in all the neighboring streets . . . going no one knew where." The refugees, numbering more than a million, dispersed all over the Reich, as far as its outer borders. The diarist Friedrich Reck, under his entry for August 20, 1943, describes a group of some forty or fifty such refugees trying to force their way into a train at a station in Upper Bavaria. As they do so, a cardboard suitcase "falls on the platform, bursts open and spills its contents. Toys, a manicure case, singed underwear. And last of all, the roasted corpse of a child, shrunk like a mummy, which its half-deranged mother has been carrying about with her, the relic of a past that was still intact a few days ago." It is hard to imagine that Reck can have invented this dreadful scene.

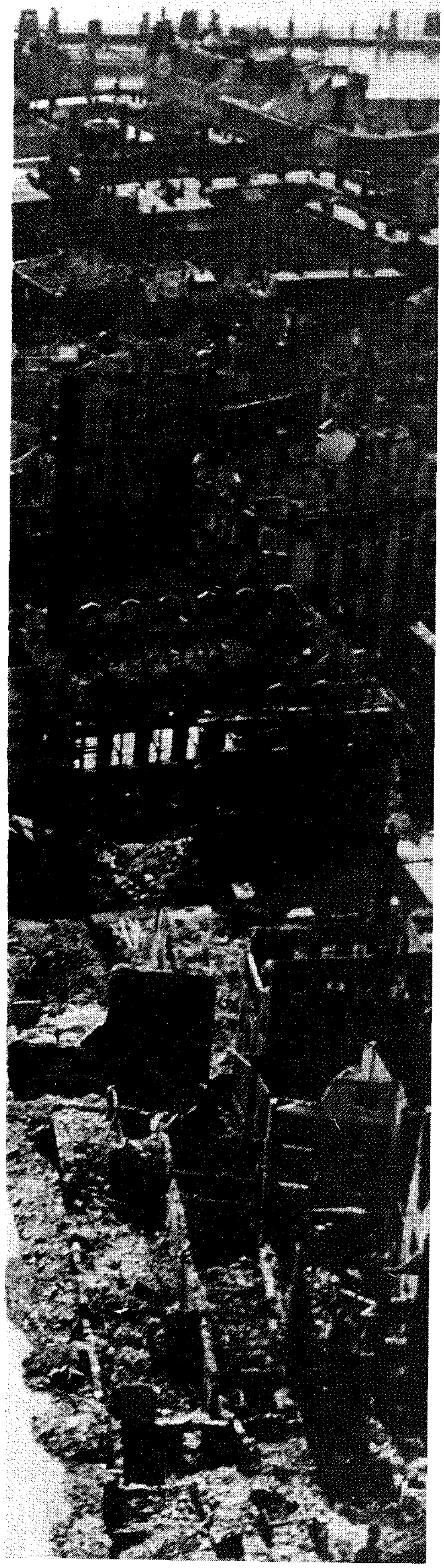
Some time ago, I was in Sheffield, where I met an elderly gentleman who, because of his Jewish origins, had been forced to leave his native Sonthofen and emigrate to England. His wife, who came to England immediately after the war, grew up in Stralsund, on the Baltic coast. A midwife by profession, this resolute lady is extremely down to earth and not given to flights of fancy. After the Hamburg firestorm, in the summer of 1943, when she was sixteen years old, she was on duty as a volunteer helper at the Stralsund railway station when a special train came in carrying refugees, most of them still utterly beside themselves, unable to speak of what had happened, struck dumb or sobbing and weeping with despair. And several of the women on this train from Hamburg, I heard on my visit to Sheffield, actually did have dead children in their luggage, children who had suffocated in the smoke or died in some other way during the air raid.

All over Germany, one way or another, news of the horrors of the destruction of Hamburg must have been spread by distraught refugees vacillating between a hysterical will to survive and leaden apathy. Reck's diary, at least, makes it clear that, in spite of the news blackout suppressing all detailed information, it was not impossible to know how horribly the cities of Germany were being destroyed. A year later, Reck describes tens of thousands camping out around the Maximilianplatz after the latest major raid on Munich. He writes, "On the nearby main road an endless stream of refugees, frail old women with bundles containing their last possessions carried on sticks over their backs. Poor homeless people with burnt clothing, their eyes reflecting the horror of the firestorm." The remarkable aspect of such accounts is their rarity. Indeed, it seems that no German writer, with the sole exception of Nossack, was ready or able to put down on paper any concrete facts about the progress and repercussions of the destruction. It was the same when the war was over. The quasi-natural reflex, engendered by feelings of shame and a wish to defy the victors, was to keep quiet and look the other way. The journalist Stig Dagerman, reporting from Germany in the autumn of 1946 for the Swedish newspaper *Expressen*, writes from Hamburg that on a train going at normal speed it took him a quarter of an hour to travel through the lunar landscape between Hasselbrook and Landwehr, and that, in all that vast wilderness, he did not see a single living soul. The train, Dagerman writes, was crammed full, like all trains in Germany, but no one looked out the windows, and he was identified as a foreigner himself *because* he looked out.

Janet Flanner made similar observations in Cologne, which, as she said in one of her reports, lay "by its river banks . . . recumbent, without beauty, shapeless in the rubble and loneliness of complete physical defeat." She continued, "Through its clogged side streets trickles what is left of its life, a dwindled population in black and with bundles—the silent German people appropriate to the silent city." That silence, that reserve, that instinctive looking away are the reasons that we know so little of what the Germans thought and observed in the five years between 1942 and 1947. The ruins where they



A view of Hamburg from a church tower in August, 1943, a month after Operation Gomorrah. Within a few minutes, the fires started



by the bombs had merged into a sea of flames.

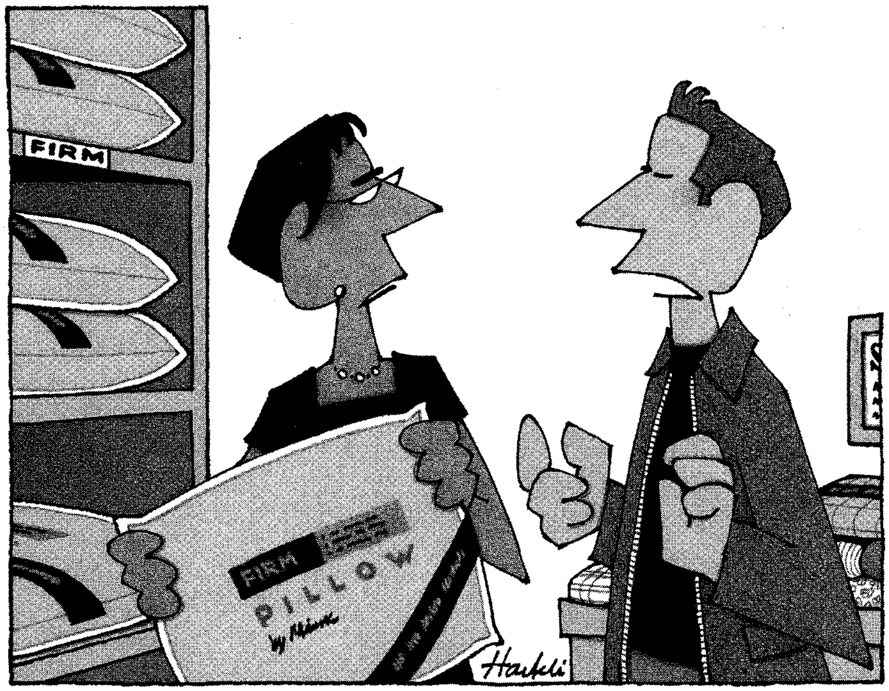
H. BRUNSWIG/BILDARCHIV PREUSSISCHER KULTURBESITZ

lived were the terra incognita of the war.

Solly Zuckerman, who visited the ravaged city of Cologne at the earliest possible opportunity, may have had a premonition of this deficiency. On his return to London, he was still overwhelmed by what he had seen. He had agreed to write a report for Cyril Connolly, then the editor of the journal *Horizon*, to be entitled "The Natural History of Destruction." In his autobiography, written decades later, Lord Zuckerman mentions that nothing came of this project. "My first view of Cologne cried out for a more eloquent piece than I could ever have written," he says. When, in the nineteen-eighties, I questioned Lord Zuckerman on the subject, he could no longer remember in detail what he had wanted to say at the time. All that remained in his mind was the image of the blackened cathedral rising from the stony desert around it, and the memory of a severed finger that he had found on a heap of rubble.

How ought such a natural history of destruction to begin? With a summary of the technical, organizational, and political prerequisites for carrying out large-scale air raids? With a scientific account of the previously unknown phenomenon of the firestorms? With a pathographical record of typical modes of death, or with behaviorist studies of the instincts of flight and homecoming? Nossack writes that after the raids on Hamburg there were no conduits available for the great tide of people that "silently and inexorably deluged everything, carrying disquiet along little rivulets and into the most remote villages." No sooner did the refugees find accommodation somewhere, Nossack continues, than they set off again, either travelling further or trying to get back to Hamburg, "whether to salvage something, or to look for relations," or for those dark reasons that compel a murderer to revisit the scene of the crime. In any case, a countless crowd of people was daily on the move. Later, Böll suggested that such experiences of collective uprooting are at the origin of the German craving for travel: a sense of being unable to stay anywhere, a constant need to be somewhere else. In terms of social conditioning, this would make the ebb and flow of the population bombed out of their homes rather like a rehearsal for initiation into the mobile society that formed in the decades after the catastrophe. Under the auspices of that society, chronic restlessness became a cardinal virtue.

Apart from the distraught behavior of the people themselves, the most striking change in the natural order of the cities during the weeks after a devastating raid was undoubtedly the sudden and alarming increase in the parasitical creatures thriving on the unburied bodies. The conspicuous sparsity of observations and comments on this phenomenon can be explained as the tacit imposition of a taboo, very understandable if one remembers that the Germans, who had proposed to cleanse and sanitize all Europe, now had to contend with a rising fear that they themselves were the rat people. "The Angel Was Silent," Böll's novel that lay so long unpublished, contains a passage in which he describes a rat among the ruins making its way from a mound of rubble to the street, sniffing the air, and there is a 1947 story by Wolfgang Borchert, who died the same year, at the age of twenty-six, in which a boy keeps watch by the body of his brother, who is buried under the rubble, his horror of the rats banished by the assurance that they sleep at night. Otherwise, as far as I can see, the only reference to the subject in the literature of that time is a single passage by Nossack about the convicts in striped uniforms who were called in to clear away "the remains of what had once been human beings," and who could reach the corpses in the air-raid shelters of the death zone only with flamethrowers, so densely did the flies swarm around them, and so thick were the floors and steps of the cellars with slippery finger-length maggots. "Rats and flies ruled the city," Nossack writes. "The rats, bold and fat, frolicked in the streets, but even more disgusting were the flies, huge and iridescent green, flies such as had never been seen before. They swarmed in great clusters on the roads, settled in heaps to copulate on ruined walls, and basked, weary and satiated, on the splinters of the windowpanes." While the majority of the survivors may have been spared direct confrontation with the most repulsive



"I sleep on my side, but I pass out on my stomach."

fauna of the rubble, they were pursued everywhere by the flies, at least, not to mention the "stench of charred household possessions, rotting and decay," which, as Nossack writes, "lay over the city." There are almost no records of those who succumbed to the sheer nausea of existence during the weeks and months after the destruction, but Hans, for one, the protagonist of "The Angel Was Silent," feels horror at the idea of having to resume life again, and nothing seems to him more natural than simply to give up, to "climb down the stairs and go into the night." Decades later, it is still characteristic of many of Böll's central characters that they lack any real will to live. This deficiency, like a stigma in the new world of success, is the legacy of an existence among the ruins which was felt to be shameful.

No one knew where the homeless stayed, although lights among the ruins after dark showed where they had moved in. This is the necropolis of a foreign, mysterious people, torn from their civil existence and their history, thrown back to the evolutionary stage of nomadic gatherers.

Let us therefore imagine "the charred ruins of the city, a dark and jagged silhouette far away beyond the allotments, towering above the railway embankment," as Böll writes, and in front of the ruins a landscape of low mounds of rubble the color of cement, with great clouds of dry, red brick dust drifting over the lifeless surroundings, a single human figure poking about in the detritus, a tram stop in the middle of nowhere, people emerging suddenly and, apparently, out of nowhere, as if they had sprung from the gray scree, "invisibly, inaudibly . . . out of this void . . . ghosts whose path and whose goal could not be perceived: figures burdened with parcels and sacks, crates and cartons." We see people who have lit small fires in the open (as if they were in the jungle, Nossack writes), stovepipes emerging from the remains of walls, smoke slowly dispersing. The Fatherland must have looked something like that in 1945. Stig Dagerman describes the lives of the cave dwellers in a city in the Ruhr: the unappetizing meals they concocted from dirty, wrinkled vegetables and dubious scraps of meat, the cold and hunger that reigned in those underground caverns, the evil fumes, the water that always stood on the cellar floors, the coughing children and their battered and sodden shoes. Dagerman says he talked to one Herr Schumann, a bank clerk then in his third year of living underground. The white faces of these people, Dagerman writes, were just like the faces of fish coming up to the surface to snatch a breath of air.

Three authors besides Heinrich Böll who did write about the destruction of the cities and postwar survival in a landscape of ruins—Nossack, along with Hermann Kasack and Peter de Mendelssohn—were linked by this common interest. Kasack and Nossack had been in regular contact since the early nineteen-forties; Mendelssohn had been living in exile in England and could scarcely grasp the full extent of the destruction when he first returned to Germany, in May, 1945. He wrote an enthusiastic review of Kasack's novel "Die Stadt Hinter dem Strom" ("The City Beyond the River"), which appeared in the spring of 1947, tried to find an English publisher for the book, and immediately started translating it himself. In 1948, as a result of his interest in Kasack, he began writing his own novel, "Die Kathedrale" ("The Cathedral"). Mendelssohn was working for the military government, helping to rebuild the German press, and the many tasks he had to shoulder made him shelve the project, and the story, which was first written in English, remained a fragment. It was published, still in fragmentary form, only in 1983.

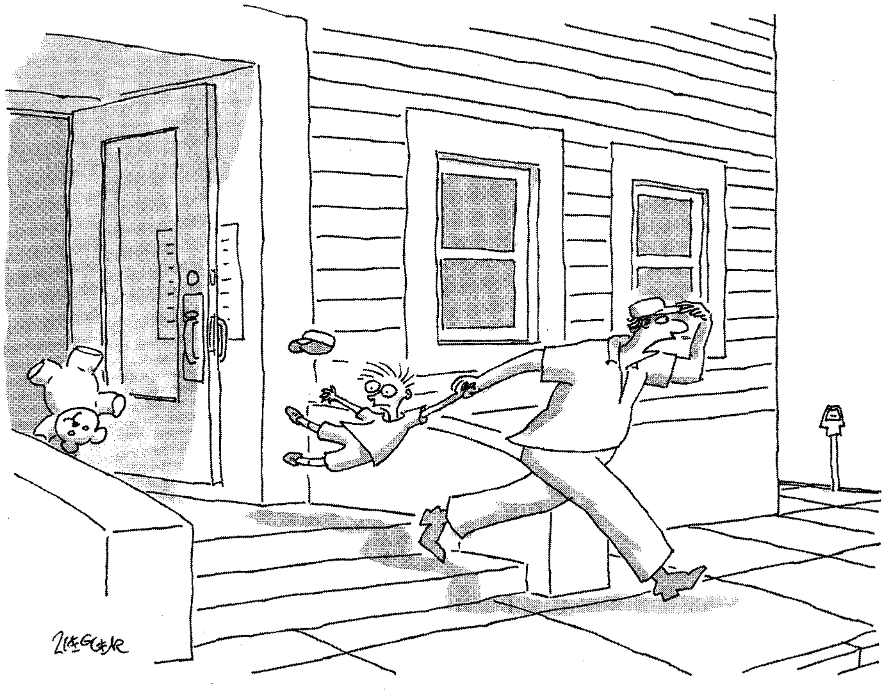
The key text of this group is undoubtedly "The City Beyond the River," a work generally considered at the time to be of epoch-making significance, and long regarded as the last word on the insanity of the National Socialist regime. "With a single book," Nossack wrote, "German literature was reinstated at the highest level, literature that had been created here, grown on our ruins." The city beyond the river in which "life, so to speak, is lived underground" manifests itself as in every way a shattered community: "Only the façades of the buildings in the surrounding streets still stood, so that a sideways glance through the rows of empty windows gave a view of the sky." And it could be argued that the account of the "lifeless life" of the people in this twilight kingdom was also inspired by the real economic and social situation between 1943 and 1947. There are no vehicles anywhere, and pedestrians walk the ruined streets apathetically, "as if they no longer felt the bleak nature of their surroundings. . . . Others could be seen in the ruined dwellings, now deprived of their purpose, searching for buried remnants of household goods." However, the lowered standard of living and the reduced economic conditions are merely the setting for the novel's paramount plan, which is to mythologize a reality that in its raw form defies description. Consequently, the fleets of bombers appear as transreal entities, rising "as if at the prompting of Indra, whose cruelty in destruction surpasses the demonic powers . . . striking like the apocalypse." Green-masked figures, members of a secret sect who give off a stale odor of gas, may be meant to symbolize the victims murdered in the camps.

In the closing passages of the novel, an attempt to make sense of the senseless is added to this mise en scène, which owes its existence to the most dubious aspects of Expressionist fantasy. The longest-serving thinker in Kasack's kingdom of the dead indicates "that for some time the initiates have been concentrating their forces on opening up and extending the region of Asia, so long cut off, for reincarnations, and they now seem to be intensifying their efforts by including the West too as an area for the resurrection of mind and body." It emerges, from further pronouncements by the Master Mage, that millions must die in this wholesale operation, "to make room for those surging forward to be reborn. A vast number of people were called away prematurely, so that they could rise again when the time came as a growing crop." The choice of words and terminology in passages such as this, which are not rare in Kasack's epic, shows with alarming clarity that the secret language supposedly cultivated by the "internal emigrants" was to a high degree identical with the code of the Fascist intellectual world.

In the 1947 novel "Nekyia: An Offering for the Dead," Nossack, too, succumbs to the temptation to make the real horrors of the time disappear through the artifice of abstraction and metaphysical fraudulence. "Nekyia," like "The City Beyond the River," is an account of a journey to the kingdom of the dead, and, also like Kasack's novel, the book contains teachers, mentors, masters, ancestors both male and female, much patriarchalist discipline, and much prenatal obscurity.

Still, it is undoubtedly to Nossack's credit that, in spite of his unfortunate tendency to indulge in philosophical exaggeration and false notions of transcendence, he was the only writer of the time to try recording what he actually saw as plainly as possible. Even in "The End," his account of the destruction of Hamburg, the rhetoric of fatefulness sometimes intrudes—he speaks of a human countenance sanctified for the transit to eternity, and matters finally take a turn toward fairy tale and allegory—but on the whole he is primarily concerned with plain facts: the season of the year, the weather, the observer's viewpoint, the drone of the approaching squadrons, the red firelight on the horizon, the physical and mental condition of refugees from the cities, the burned-out scenery, chimneys that curiously remain standing, washing put out to dry on a frame outside a kitchen window, a torn net curtain blowing from an empty veranda, a living-room sofa with a crochet cover, countless other objects lost forever, the rubble burying them and the dreadful new life moving beneath it, people's sudden craving for perfume. On the whole, the moral imperative for at least *one* writer to describe what happened in Hamburg on that night in July leads him to abandon elaboration. His account, given in dispassionate language, tells of "a terrible event in prehistoric times." A group of people were burned to death in a bombproof shelter because the doors had jammed, and coal stored in the cellars next to it caught fire. That's how it was: "They had all fled from the hot walls to the middle of the cellar. They were found there crowded together, bloated with the heat." The narrative tone here is that of the messenger in classical tragedy. Nossack knows that such messengers are often strung up for their pains. Inserted into his account of the fall of Hamburg is the parable of a man who claims that he must speak of what actually happened, and whose audience kills him for the deathly chill he spreads.

Those who can salvage some metaphysical meaning from the destruction are usually spared such a wretched fate; their trade is less dangerous than dealing in concrete memory. Elias Canetti, in an essay on the diary of Dr. Hachiya from Hiroshima, asks what it means to survive such a vast catastrophe, and says that the answer can be gauged only from



"O.K., kid. Busy man here. Quality time. Here we go."

a text that, like Hachiya's observations, is notable for precision and responsibility. Canetti writes, "If there were any point in wondering what form of literature is essential to a thinking, seeing human being today, then it is this." The same may be said of Nossack's account of the destruction of the city of Hamburg, which is unique even in his own work. The ideal of truth inherent in its entirely unpretentious objectivity, at least over long passages, proves itself the only legitimate reason for continuing to produce literature in the face of total destruction. Conversely, the construction of aesthetic or pseudo-aesthetic effects from the ruins of an annihilated world is a process depriving literature of its right to exist.

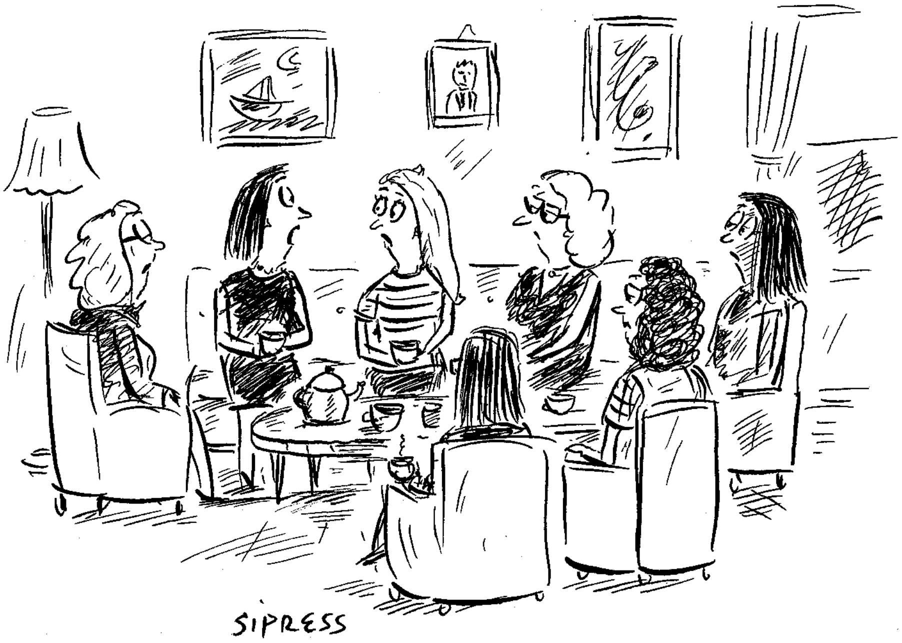
As an example, it would be difficult to surpass the page after page of embarrassing writing in Peter de Mendelssohn's "The Cathedral," which lay unpublished for so long (and a good thing, too, one is tempted to say), and even after publication attracted little notice.

Mendelssohn cites all manner of horrors, as if to show that he does not shrink from depicting the reality of destruction in its most drastic aspects. Even so, an unfortunate tendency toward melodrama remains dominant. Torstenson, the hero of the story, sees "the head of an old woman forced, all awry, into a broken window frame," and almost steps on the bare breast of a dead woman. Torstenson feared, Torstenson saw, Torstenson thought, had the impression that, was in some doubt as to whether, judged that, was at odds with himself, was disinclined—it is from this egomaniacal viewpoint that we are obliged to follow a plot that obviously borrowed its grandiose triviality from the screenplays written by Thea von Harbou for Fritz Lang, and particularly the script for the 1927 megaproduction "Metropolis."

According to Mendelssohn, the book was to end with Torstenson putting out to sea in one of the great barges used to clear the ruins; as the rubble sinks into the depths, he sees the whole city down on the seabed, complete and undamaged, another Atlantis: "All that was destroyed above is intact down here, and everything that is left standing up above, in particular the cathedral, is not present down here." Torstenson climbs down a flight of steps in the water and into the sunken city, where he is arrested and must plead for his life before a court of law. Torstenson, who encounters an orphan boy at the beginning of the novel, soon comes upon a seventeen-year-old girl just out of a work camp. When they meet for the first time, on the steps of the cathedral, "in the bright sunlight," the rags of her dress slip off her shoulders, and Torstenson studies her, "calmly and thoroughly." We are told, "She was a dirty, grubby girl, beaten black and blue, with tangled black hair, but in her slender and supple youth she was lovely as a goddess from the groves of antiquity." Appropriately, it turns out that the girl's name is Aphrodite Homeriades, and (to provide an additional frisson) she is a Greek Jew from Salonika. Torstenson, who at first contemplates sleeping with this strange beauty himself, finally, and in a kind of reconciliation scene, leads her to the German boy so that she can teach him the secret of life—an echo of the final frames of "Metropolis," which are shot outside the gateway of a mighty cathedral.

It is not easy to sum up the quantities of lasciviousness and ultra-German racial kitsch offered by Mendelssohn to his readers (with, we must assume, the best of intentions), but, in any case, his wholesale fictionalization of the theme of the ruined city is the opposite of the prosaic sobriety for which Nossack strives in the best passages of "The End." Where Nossack successfully exercises deliberate restraint in his approach to the horrors unleashed by Operation Gomorrah, Mendelssohn plunges headlong into more than two hundred pages of trash.

It remains for me to mention a letter from Darmstadt that I received not long ago concerning the air war. I had to read it several times, because at first I could not believe my eyes. It propounds the theory that the Allies waged war in the air with the aim of cutting off the Germans from their origins and inheritance by destroying their cities, thus paving the way for the cultural invasion and general Americanization that ensued in the postwar period. This deliberate strategy, continues the letter from Darmstadt, was devised by Jews living abroad, exploiting the special knowledge of the human psyche, foreign cultures, and foreign mentalities which they are known to have acquired in their wanderings. The letter, written in a tone as assertive as it is businesslike, closes by hoping that I will reply by sending back to Darmstadt my professional opinion of the theses it puts forward. I do not know who Dr. H., the letter writer, is, or the nature of his pro-



"We used to be an investment club. Now we're a support group."

fession, or whether he is involved with some group or party of the radical right, nor can I pronounce on the little cross that he adds to his signature, both handwritten and computer-generated, except that people like Dr. H., who see secret machinations everywhere working against the vital interests of Germany, like to belong to some kind of order or association. As far as I have been able to discover, he is about my age and therefore not of the generation subject to direct Nazi influence. Having made inquiries, I have also discovered that he is not notorious in Darmstadt for being of unsound mind (the one thing that might have been some excuse for his bizarre hypotheses). Indeed, he seems to be in full possession of his mental faculties and obviously lives in respectable circumstances.

It is true that the combination of fantastic delusions, on the one hand, and an upright way of life, on the other, is typical of the particular fault line that ran through the German mind during the first half of the twentieth century. That fault line is nowhere more evident than in the correspondence of the Nazis, which, in its curious mingling of insanity with an alleged interest in objectivity, has left a ghostly mark on the ideas set down on paper by Dr. H. As for the actual "theses" that Dr. H. offers, not without pride in his own acumen, they are nothing but a derivative of the so-called "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," that pseudo-documentary forgery first circulated in tsarist Russia, claiming the existence of an international Jewish body that aimed to dominate the world and ruin entire nations with its conspiratorial wire-pulling. The most virulent variant of this notion was the legend of an enemy, invisible, ever present, and attacking the nation from within, which was to be found everywhere in Germany after the First World War, from the beer hall to the press, in the culture industry, in the organs of state, and, finally, in the legislature. Whether openly or covertly, that enemy was identified with the Jewish minority.

It is obvious that Dr. H. could not take such claims on board without modification, since long before the Allies began their bombing campaign the rhetoric of denunciation had led, throughout the German sphere of influence, to the removal of legal rights from Jews, the confiscation of their property, their exile, and their systematic annihilation. He therefore circumspectly confines his suspicions to Jews living abroad. When, in a curious rider, he contends that those whom he holds responsible for the destruction of Germany acted not so much out of hatred as from their special knowledge of foreign cultures and mentalities, he is crediting them with such motives as those of the subversive genius of self-transformation Dr. Mabuse, the title character in Fritz Lang's 1922 film.

Mabuse, who is himself of uncertain provenance, can adapt to any background. We see him in the first sequence as the speculator Sternberg, whose criminal manipulations cause chaos on the stock market. As the film goes on, he appears as a gambler in illegal casinos, the head of a criminal gang, the power behind a forgery operation, a seditious rabble-rouser and a phony revolutionary, and then, under the ominous name of Sandor Weltmann, as a hypnotist with power even over those who do their utmost to withstand him. In a shot characteristically lasting only seconds, the camera shows us, at the front door of this expert operator who can paralyze the will and destroy the mind, a plate with the words "Dr. Mabuse—Psychoanalyst." Like the foreign Jews of Dr. H.'s imagination, Dr. Mabuse is not motivated by hatred. He is concerned only with power and the desire for power. With his expert understanding of the human psyche, he can get inside the heads of his victims. He ruins the gamblers who play with him, destroys Count Told, steals his wife, and brings his antagonist, the attorney von Wenk, who in Thea von Harbou's scenario represents the archetypal Prussian nobleman, to the brink of death.

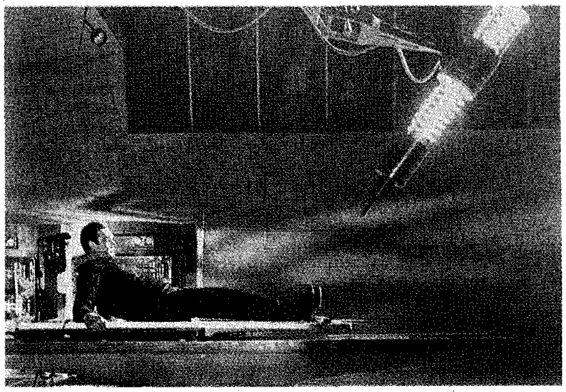
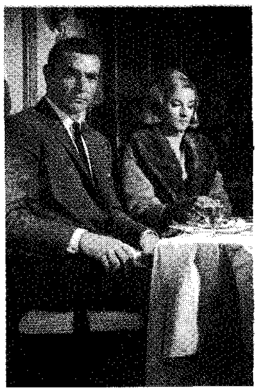
Fritz Lang's film is a paradigm of the xenophobia that spread among Germans from the end of the nineteenth century onward. Dr. H.'s remark about the Jewish specialists in human mentality who are allegedly behind the strategy of destroying the German cities derives from this hysterical view of German society's constitution as a whole.

From a present-day standpoint, one may be inclined to dismiss the utterances of Dr. H. as the absurdities of someone who will never learn. And absurd they certainly are, but no less appalling for that. For, if anything first set off the immeasurable suffering that we Germans inflicted on the world, it was language of this kind, spread out of ignorance and resentment.

The majority of Germans today know—or so, at least, it is to be hoped—that we actually provoked the annihilation of the cities in which we once lived. Scarcely anyone can now doubt that Göring, with his Luftwaffe, would have wiped out London if his technical resources had allowed him to do so. Albert Speer describes Hitler at a dinner in the Reich Chancellery in 1940 imagining the total destruction of the capital of the British Empire: "Have you ever seen a map of London? It is so densely built that one fire alone would be enough to destroy the whole city, just as it did over two hundred years ago. Göring will start fires all over London, fires everywhere, with countless incendiary bombs of an entirely new type. Thousands of fires. They will unite in one huge blaze over the whole area. Göring has the right idea: high explosives don't work, but we can do it with incendiaries; we can destroy London completely. What will their firemen be able to do once it's really burning!" This intoxicating vision of destruction coincides with the fact that the real pioneering achievements in bomb warfare—Guernica, Warsaw, Belgrade, Rotterdam—were the work of the Germans.

And, as we think of the nights when the fires raged in Cologne and Hamburg and Dresden, we ought also to remember that as early as August, 1942, when the vanguard of the German Sixth Army had reached the Volga and not a few were dreaming of settling down after the war on an estate in the cherry orchards beside the quiet Don, the city of Stalingrad, then swollen (like Dresden later) by an influx of refugees, was under assault from hundreds of bombers, and that during this raid alone, which caused elation among the German troops stationed on the opposite bank, forty thousand people lost their lives. ♦

(*Translated, from the German, by Anthea Bell.*)

A CRITIC AT LARGE

MONDO BOND

Forty years of 007.

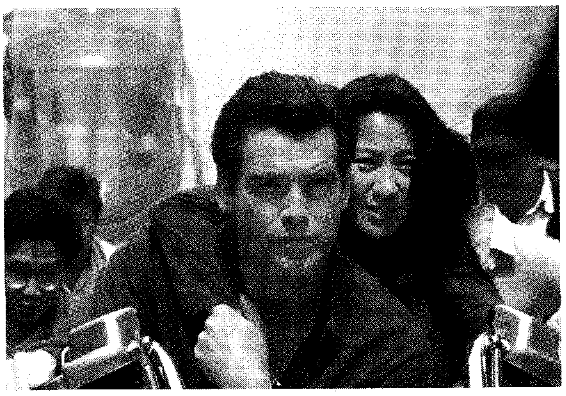
BY ANTHONY LANE

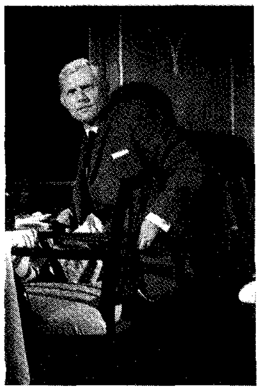
All right, pay attention, 007. Here are some things that are great about James Bond movies: the suits, the drinks, the stunts, the cars, the hubcaps of the cars, the men, the women, the posters, the weather, the music, the sex, the life. Here are some things that are not so great about James Bond movies: James Bond movies. Have you ever tried to *watch* "A View to a Kill," a work so bereft of ideas that it chooses to employ Grace Jones as a special effect? Now is the moment to reflect on this curious discrepancy—between the completed films and the stuff they contain, between the millions of brain cells that will die as you sit in front of "Moonraker" for two hours and the pleasure of hearing Q say to M, "I think he's attempting reëntry, sir," while Roger Moore makes interlunar love to Lois Chiles, adrift in what he, of all people, must recognize as zero gravity.

The time is ripe for two reasons. One, because the rumbling hiss you hear behind you is the sound of a 007 project preparing to launch. "Die Another Day" is the twentieth Bond picture, and, as the name suggests, the producers of the series, who long ago ran out of Ian Fleming books to choose from, are no closer to finding titles with a discernible meaning. The last movie, "The World Is Not Enough," took its inspiration from the Bond family motto, and in the future we can presumably look forward to films named after 007's boyhood tortoise, his sockmakers, and the level of his cholesterol. Still, come November 22nd, I expect to be jumping up and down on the sidewalk outside "Die Another Day," agog at the prospect of brand-new Bond. Its virtues include Halle Berry in a flame-hued bikini, more of Pierce Brosnan, more of Judi Dench's M, a song by Madonna, and a baddie who, after a contretemps with 007, has been left scarred with "diamond shrapnel." Love it.

The fuss is more pronounced on this occasion because forty years have elapsed since the release of "Dr. No," the first of all the Bonds. I speak with a vested interest, since my mother went to see James Bond when she was expecting me. I was already two weeks late, enjoying the cinematic darkness of the womb, and my father, with a vague but prophetic belief that I could be induced by sheer excitement, took my mother to see "Dr. No." Sadly, the experiment failed. I am told that I took another three days to appear, although I like to think that my parents spared me the truth, that I was indeed born in a movie theatre, and that the first thing I ever saw in the universe was Ursula Andress's conch.

In short, I have been walking this Earth for as long as 007 has been patrolling our screens, and the contrast does neither myself nor my contemporaries any favors. On the wall of my bathroom is an original poster for "Goldfinger," sporting the tag line "Everything





he touches turns to excitement!" This is not guaranteed to inspire good will when you're struggling to fix the shower head. Bond still drives an Aston Martin—his newest model is the unambiguous V12 Vanquish, which will doubtless come with accessories every bit as practical as the ejector seat of its predecessor, the DB5—whereas we grind around town in dented beige station wagons, equipped with state-of-the-art juice boxes and high-intensity dog hairs. Nothing is more galling than Bond's locomotion; still cruising after all these years, he has escaped the inferno of coach class, and, were we ever to glimpse him at baggage claim, glumly awaiting a faded hold-all, the magic would drop away. As it is, the world is still his oyster, full of pearly girls.

One could argue that Bond has an unfair advantage. After all, whenever age begins to muster its forces, launching sneak raids on the lines of his waist and hair, the producers simply throw the actor away and buy another one. 007 is the bastard son of Dorian Gray, blessed with a license to kill and a refusal to die, doomed to stay fit and chipper while his earlier selves gradually thicken and molder in the attic. All of which may account for the envy that writhes at the root of our mania for Bond: if only we, too, could recast ourselves at will, discarding our skin as it wrinkles, exchanging our grins and tics for something fresher as they sag into mannerism. Hamlet is transfigured by every performance, and even the senescence of Lear demands rejuvenation; when Olivier enters and exits those roles, he leaves behind a trace of his temperament, and the character—more flux than fixed point—will be subtly but irrevocably changed. Bond, on the other hand, is a brand; although we instinctively compare Sean Connery with Roger Moore, the product is larger than either of them, and he is marketed as ferociously as his chosen Smirnoff. The actors can shake his image all they like, but the man himself is unstirred.

How did the whole thing start? In 1961, the producers Harry Saltzman and Albert R. (Cubby) Broccoli, having secured the rights to Bond, held what amounted to a beauty contest. They whittled the contestants for the leading role down to a dashing six; so we are informed, at any rate, by John Cork and Bruce Scivally, in "James Bond: The Legacy" (Abrams; $49.95), a dense and gleaming companion to the 007 phenomenon. The initial winner was not Connery but—wait for it—"28-year-old Peter Anthony, a professional model." Everything about those words is perfect; let us take a moment to picture Mr. Anthony, the aftershave rising off him like steam from a thoroughbred, gazing maturely into the middle distance in his club-class knitwear and international slacks. If he subsequently lost the job, it was only because Broccoli decided that "he lacks the technique to cope with such a demanding part."

Thus Connery strolled into the role, and the rest was history, chemistry, exotic geography, and all the other core subjects in the Bond curriculum. The budget wouldn't run to a Rolex, so Broccoli unsnapped one from his wrist and tossed it over. Cast against Bond as Dr. No was Joseph Wiseman, who had no inkling of the storm that the film would create, or of the long line of malformed egomaniacs in tight collars that it was his unwitting privilege to head. "I thought it might be just another Grade-B Charlie Chan mystery," Wiseman said, and in some ways he wasn't wrong. The Bond series is a B-movie franchise that turned into an A-list event. The most telling exchange in "Dr. No," all those years ago, comes when Bond is informed, over a glass of Dom Pérignon '55, of the Doctor's nefarious plans. Connery unleashes his patent combination of smile, smirk,

and sigh, the classic reaction of urbanity to insanity, and replies, "World domination. Same old dream." And this, remember, is the first Bond film. Our man, though he does not know it yet, has nineteen more showcases ahead of him, each equipped with an extravagant villain, and already he is bored by the bluster—the windy menace of those who would be kings.

Needless to say, Dr. No fails, just as Hugo Drax, Emilio Largo, Ernst Stavro Blofeld, and all the other nincompoops fail, largely because of their tendency, when at home in their lairs, to avoid the normal practice known as walking and instead cover extremely short distances by monorail. Yet, by an overarching irony, there is indeed a solitary, driven figure into whose thrall the planet will swoon and slide. Our world is dominated by James Bond as by no other fictional character, with an easy grasp of human folly. It is now estimated that a quarter of the Earth's population has seen at least one Bond movie. Same old dream.

Whether by accident or design, "Dr. No" stumbled upon a narrative formula from which Bond producers have seldom dared to stray. After a couple of early murders, the mood of the first half of the movie rises to one of jocular elegance. Style junkies have long looked to the early Bonds for their fix of sixties allure, and there is something addictive in the lightweight suits with their slender lapels, the shirts of palest blue, and—a lovely touch for the holder of a 00 prefix, whose entitlement to murder goes with the job—the tie of unobtrusive black. None of this would be news to a reader of Ian Fleming; the snobbery of the books was watered down for the movies, which reproduced the highlights of Bond's wardrobe but barely hinted at the pedantry of his tastes. We know of his preference at the bar, yet one of my abiding regrets is that no director, however gargantuan his budget, has had the courage to shape a scene around Bond's predilection for potato salad.

The conundrum of "Dr. No," as of all but a handful of the Bond pictures, is as follows: How does a film start out as a thriller—more grounded than outlandish—and wind up as some inflated nonsense about rogue rocketry and the sabotaging of global peace? Out goes the flirting and the tuxedo, and in comes a grim set of the jaw and a generous but random distribution of giant fireballs. I know of no moviegoer who finds this transformation remotely cathartic. The only genre that clings to such unsatisfying structures with anything like the same conservatism is the porno flick; as the performers heave and bellow their way toward the climactic blowout, you sense the absolute drainage not just of humor but—and this is really bad news—of genuine arousal, and so it is with Bond. All the sexiness of a Bond movie, all the glimmers of a desirable existence, are there in the buildup. The salvation of mankind, by comparison, is a bit of a letdown. Who would want to be Pierce Brosnan in the closing minutes of "The World Is Not Enough," barging around a submarine and trying to stop the villain from slotting a rod of plutonium into its correct hole? Ursula Andress would have taken one look and jumped back into the sea.

Sean Connery made seven Bond films. After "Dr. No" came "From Russia with Love" (1963), "Goldfinger" (1964), "Thunderball" (1965), and "You Only Live Twice" (1967). Then came two lesser affairs: "Diamonds Are Forever" (1971) and "Never Say Never Again," a tired semi-spoof made in 1983. Even by the time of "Thunderball" there was a heaviness to the Connery brow, a less feline grace in his step, which suggested a wish to move on; he did not rediscover his natural ease, the unforced manliness that had seen him perch on Miss Moneypenny's desk ("Let me tell you the secret of the world," he croons into her ear) and aim his trilby so zealously at her hat stand, until "The Untouchables" (1987) and the onset of his astounding second youth.

And so the role of Bond was thrown into the air, to be caught by four other men: George Lazenby, who made "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" (1969) and who was, more or less, never heard from again; Roger Moore, who made seven films in the series, starting with "Live and Let Die" (1973) and ending with "A View to a Kill" (1985); Timothy Dalton, the star of "The Living Daylights" (1987) and the nasty "License to Kill" (1989); and, more fittingly, Pierce Brosnan, who to date has delivered "GoldenEye" (1995), "Tomorrow Never Dies" (1997), and "The World Is Not Enough" (1999).

Of the many oddities in that roster of Bonds, the first is one of nationality. You may quibble with the idea of Bond as a Savile Row gent, but Roger Moore is the only actor who fits that description; that his 007 was something of a joke—in real life he is a self-deprecating figure of charm and charity, and he carried that arch amusement into the films—is no coincidence. Connery would die for Scotland, Lazenby came from Australia, Dalton is described by "James Bond: The Legacy" as Welsh, which was news to me, and Brosnan is a proud Irish soul. I doubt whether this was a conscious policy on the part of Broccoli and Saltzman, but it was tempting fate to put a staunch, purebred Brit in a bunch of movies that were themselves, to a surreal degree, about the staunchness of British conduct.

It's no surprise that Bond should have encouraged Britain to indulge in a prolonged fantasy of punching above its weight; we should expect it of a nation declining in power, as we do of a depleted man. What is surprising is that for four decades the rest of the world has been good enough, or gullible enough, to buy into that ridiculous dream. Few, even in England, regret the wholesale loss of empire, but on what possible ground do audiences everywhere, not least in former colonies, choose to revel in the notion that a tall dark Englishman might best be called upon to clean up the globe and make it a nicer place to play in? It seems as absurd as asking the inhabitant of an English prep school—a small boy called Potter, say—to learn the arts of wizardry and wield them in the annihilation of evil. Maybe that is why we grant room in our lives for James and Harry (and could there be anything more English, at once kingly and childish, than those names?): they speak of

PAGES 78-79: UNITED ARTISTS/SHOOTING STAR (1,2,7,9); EVERETT COLLECTION (3,4,5,6,8); PHOTOFEST (10)

I'M WITH THE GREAT SATAN
Shanahan

• •

individual grit, of the loner who can politely put the lid on universal malice without invoking the need for religious or political muscle—Harry is a young knight, but he lacks a Round Table, and Bond is an imperialist without an empire. We can love him and not feel the pinch of guilt.

Regular efforts have been made to send 007 into the arena of Realpolitik, or to hint that his idea of espionage might be more than a cartoon of the real thing; Judi Dench moved into M's chair after a woman named Stella Rimington took charge of MI5. There is, needless to say, no linkage at any point; Bond lives in a bubble, and the events of the world outside are no more than patches of color playing over the surface. The end of the Cold War was germane to his purposes not because 007 has much to tell us about post-Soviet fragmentation but because it immediately lengthened the wish list of cool locations, like East European pipelines that you zip through on a bullet sled. If Pierce Brosnan has overseen the resurgence of Bond, the reason must be that he is Pierce Brosnan—a creature of immaculate exterior and no core, and thus an ideal vessel of the fantastic. His last three outings as Bond have earned a billion dollars; it is as though the hot competition—"True Lies," the "Die Hard" series, the Austin Powers lampoons, and even the thoughtful contribution made recently by Vin Diesel—had spurred 007, and his special-effects crew, to stay ahead of the pack. (You could taste the fear in a recent Bond poster, which bullied us with the words "There is no substitute.") The most worrying detail of the Brosnan era is that, while "GoldenEye" took three hundred and fifty million dollars at the box office, the computer game of the same story made even more. How the implications of that success will feed back into future films, one shudders to imagine.

There is also something unapologetic in Brosnan's bearing, as in his public pronouncements, which seems to touch the nerve of a shameless age. As he says of 007, "He is a sexist. Completely. And if you don't make him that, then you don't have a Bond movie. And people want a Bond movie." Yes, Commander. Heaven knows, there has always been a sea of sexism lapping round the Bond films; well before you reached the cinema, the covers of the tie-in Fleming editions bombarded you with a selection of swimwear, and the very sound of the heroines' names—Plenty O'Toole and Xenia Onatopp being the most fragrant—suggested that Andrea Dworkin may have been right all along. Yet a faint mystery drifts around the Bond women, who fall into his bed but somehow stay beyond his reach; I sometimes picture them making contact over the Internet, getting together for coffee, and giggling over his crummy pickup lines. Moore telling a novice female agent "I'm sure we'll be able to lick you into shape" is an obvious contender, yet there is something even sadder about Timothy Dalton's efforts to invest 007 with an appreciable depth of emotion. In "The Living Daylights," he listens to Kara Milovy (Maryam d'Abo) playing cello in one of Borodin's quartets, and tells her afterward, "It was exquisite." He is right, but the line is badly out of tune; such discerning intensity has no place in these pictures, which are rarely more than a crotchet away from the comic. The bevy of viewers who sprinted out from the film to buy Borodin was outnumbered by those who got hold of Maryam d'Abo in *Playboy*, daubed nostalgically in gold.

The racism of the Bond films is another matter, and a meaner one. Bond himself is unbothered; he has black sidekicks, and many black girlfriends, but the films around him fail shamefully to match that tolerant demeanor. The prejudice spreads beyond color, into foreignness of every kind: all Russians are corrupt, all Japanese are hard to read, and very few men with fluffy white cats on their laps are likely to attend church on a regular basis. Viewers of "Live and Let Die," the first Moore picture, might have hoped that the advent of a new Bond, in 1973, would freshen up stale attitudes, and yet to sit through the film without squirming will test all but the most rednecked of viewers. From the opening sequences, set in New Orleans, we are dropped into a den of unsavory clichés. As a rule of thumb, you should steer clear of voodoo flicks, and no raising of Bond's insouciant eyebrow can gainsay the master of voodoo ceremonies, complete with his nose-to-the-lens clowning and maddened eyes.

This is tricky territory for me, since I missed out on Connery and grew up with Moore. It is like being too young to remember the first moon landing but old enough to get into the later missions, with their golfing larks and trips in the Lunar Rover—again, precisely my experience. I knew that there had to be more to life than Moore, and I guess his handlers knew it, too; in "The Man with the Golden Gun," there was an ill-advised twist in which the real Moore was confronted by a waxwork of himself. Even now, studio insiders like to gossip about precisely which of the two Rogers was put under contract for the remaining films. Yet the fact is that not only did I watch these jamborees but they are stuck fast to my memory; what a joy it was to turn on the television a few weeks ago and come upon "The Spy Who Loved Me," not least the sight of Moore hurtling down a ski slope with four enemy agents on his tail. Or, to be accurate, a ski double hurtling down a slope, intercut with occasional shots of Roger swaying gently against a fast-moving back projection of snow. At a guess, I would say that he is astride the same machine that was first used by Elizabeth Taylor for the racing sequences in "National Velvet," and subsequently by David Tomlinson and Angela Lansbury for their "bobbing along" number in "Bedknobs and Broomsticks." By common consent, "The Spy Who Loved Me" was the best of the Moore projects, with some of the outsized splashiness of Pop art. How can you not admire a film in which a major from Russian intelligence is played by Barbara Bach? Of course, there was another wellspring of the film's success: a good song. "Nobody does it better," Carly Simon cried, and the words were a cunning hymn to the staying power of our hero, in the boudoir and beyond.

The correlation between the buzz of a Bond song and the value of the surrounding film is not an exact science, but as a quick tip it's hard to beat: in brief, if you hear Shirley Bassey belting out a tune until the buttons pop off her dress, stay with the picture, whereas the barnyard wailing of Sheena Easton ("For Your Eyes Only") or Lulu ("The Man with the Golden Gun") should tell you that cinema history is unequivocally not being made. Above all, listen for John Barry, the Bond composer par excellence: not late Barry—how much was he paid to collaborate on "A View to a Kill" with Duran Duran, a band that should have split up even faster than the U.S.S.R.?—but early Barry, in the days of "Goldfinger," "Thunderball," "On Her Majesty's Secret Service," "You Only Live Twice," and "Diamonds Are Forever" ("Unlike men, the diamonds linger"). To think of Bond without music would require an impossible shrinking of the senses; the final guitar pluck of the Bond theme is one of the two great chords of the nineteen-sixties, the other—very similar—being the first, hanging twang of "A Hard Day's Night," before the melody kicks in.

Barry is one of the leading lights of Bond, matched behind the scenes by Ken Adam and Maurice Binder. Adam dreamed up the sets—some of the grandest visual gags ever seen, like the sliding false top of a volcano in "You Only Live Twice"—and Binder devised the credit sequences, with their naked girls pole-dancing along the barrels of smoking guns (is it me, or is there the faintest whisper of sexual symbolism here?). These men, along with the stars and producers, are responsible for what we think of as the art of 007; there has never been a world-class, first-rate director hired for Bond, and when a serious contender, Michael Apted, did get the job, for "The World Is Not Enough," the outcome bore no imprint of his style. This has to be a deliberate tactic on the part of the producers: they control Bond, and the last thing they want is a definable aesthetic flavor stealing in to adulterate the blend. Adam's dizzying designs sit there, and the camera stares at them in awe; there is no attempt to dramatize their effect on the lives that are lived within them, partly because the films have no time to consider ordinary people, but also because it takes a Fritz Lang or a Chaplin to approach an overpowering space, as in "Metropolis" or "Modern Times," and to explore the dread and the oppression that it exudes. Bond films represent cinema for people who see no need for movies to possess a style—who appreciate stylishness but shy away from the signature of an artist. That is why we treasure the offcuts of Bond and not the whole, the gems prized free from their settings; when it comes to "Goldfinger," I like Oddjob's killer Frisbee of a hat, I like the laser beam that eats its way toward Connery's crotch, and some of us can even stomach his golfing gear, but I can catch that film on TV, go out to make a sandwich, and walk back in for my favorite sequence without feeling a spasm of loss. When "North by Northwest" comes on, however, I have to stay with it, and to hell with lunch.

Having just crawled through an assault course of old Bonds, and duly bruised myself on the desperation of the running gags (anyone for Jaws, the jolly giant with the steel gnashers?), I have found only two pictures that escape the tunnel vision of the franchise. "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" may feature the maligned George Lazenby, but the movie does boast Diana Rigg, and something in its leanness and its glances at mortality—Rigg dies at the end—pulls it close to the Fleming original. Then there is "From Russia with Love," whose casual cruelties make you long to know what Buñuel might have done with it; he would have salivated, no question, over the contrast between Daniela Bianchi, by far the most elegant of 007's blondes, and Lotte Lenya, the crone from SPECTRE with homicidal shoes. Watch Connery checking his Turkish hotel room for bugs; he prowls around in a dark suit, eyes flashing, the camera following like a valet; the great James Bond theme, which we now associate with car chases, plays over the quiet scene and bathes it in both menace and fun. Try buying that as a computer game.

Is there any hope of retrieving such sophistication—the refinement not of technology but of suavity, in which a microphone tucked behind a painting seems more telling than a trip to outer space? I believe I have the answer. All right, 007, listen carefully: I want you to go and meet a gentleman named Lee. Ang Lee. Born in Taiwan but now, as far as we can gather, working for the Americans. Take him a copy of this novel, "Casino Royale." It may look like an ordinary paperback, but concealed within is an array of clever tricks, some of them, I don't mind telling you, on the dodgy side, and—here's the thing—nobody seems to have put it to proper use. There was once a joke version, but that doesn't count. Be a good chap and tell our Mr. Lee to turn the book into a period drama, would you? You know the form: convertible Bentley for you, conical bras for the ladies. Got that? Oh, and a message from Q: Grow up, 007. ♦

FICTION

ONLY A THING

BY ANTONYA NELSON

You could compare a certain kind of love affair to a car wreck. You don't expect it, and yet when it does happen it seems somehow inevitable—even overdue. There is the status quo, and then its interruption; a pattern, then variation. Julia had felt a crash coming ever since they had rented the brand-new Intrepid in Cancún. What was she doing riding around in a foreign country in what was, in Mexico, a foreign car, with someone other than her husband behind the wheel? Foreign, foreign, foreign. The car had only eighteen miles on it when they plowed into a wall.

The wall, made of ugly cement block, was being repainted. An elderly Mexican man was slowly brushing over graffiti, tracing atop the foul Spanish as if he were writing it himself, unwriting it, in slow motion. Julia had noticed him before the crash, had thought in a brilliant lucid flash that having sex with a new man was like tracing graffiti in order to erase it: the same motions, the undoing in the doing. And then Martin had crashed the car into the wall.

The painter guided Julia gently by the arm to a neat pile of rubble, painted white, no doubt by him, to resemble curbing. Of the totalled, steaming vehicle, he said, philosophically, his brush held like a torch, "Is only a thing."

"*Gracias*," she said.

Martin meanwhile stormed around, swearing in English, circling the crashed Intrepid as if to conjure up a repair. He wore his traveller's pants: the legs unzipped so that the slacks became shorts. Good for climbing volcanoes, visiting cathedrals, a fabric so light it would dry overnight, slung over a shower rod. Martin's legs were muscled, hairless because he cycled, red now because he was fair and had burned. "God *damn*," he kept saying. The front right wheel had been completely sheared from what Julia believed was called the "axle." That (possible) axle had scraped a deep gouge into the pavement of the street and the crumbling painted rocks beside it, just before the front fender had met the wall. The poor painter would now have to plaster as well. Bits of yellow and silver plastic from the headlight and fender glittered in the sunshine. Atop the wall pieces of glass sparkled, too, sharp and alluring—you wanted to touch them with a fingertip just to risk getting pricked.

Martin: he had no title, in Julia's life. He also was married, so Julia was his mistress. But what was he? *Master*, Julia thought—only Barbara Eden in her bikini and groovy genie bottle could get away with that. Julia shivered giddily, relieved to be alive, recalling old sitcoms, sitting on terra firma in the hot Mexican sunshine. An overfilled bus slowed to admire the Americans' bad luck, and Julia observed herself as if from the crowded window, a bottle-blond woman dethroned, removed to the gutter in her goofy pedal pushers and daisy-topped flip-flops.

"You neck?" the painter inquired, peering down at Julia as she massaged herself. It was whiplash, she supposed. Everything else seemed fine, toes wiggling in their rubber thongs, heart beating in its ribby cage, but her neck ached. Not fatally. The flow that had constituted her life had simply been diverted. She was interested in what would happen next, but the crash wasn't a tragedy, just a glitch. A wall had popped up in front of them, like a piece of toast, like a warning shot, like a love affair. That was all.

It might have been the accident that made her dwell, that night, on the dead brother of her husband, Teddy. The brother had been only seventeen when he died, ten years before Julia and Teddy met. He was therefore a ghost to Julia, dead without her having known him, haunting her life nonetheless. Not unhelpfully, she thought. If Teddy hadn't lost his brother, he wouldn't be who he was, and Julia would never have met or fallen in love with him. This ghost, named Billy, accounted for Teddy's character, for choices he'd made, people he'd befriended, places he'd gone, the man he'd become.

Billy had been Teddy's only brother. Good-hearted, bespectacled, asthmatic, conceivably homosexual Billy, whom Teddy had spent his young life educating and defending. On his behalf Teddy had mowed the lawn, punched the bullies, purchased beer, chauffeured, chided, counselled, consoled. Later, it was Teddy who'd supplied the cocaine and the prostitute, the tequila and the hotel room. Billy had probably died happy, Julia thought, having gone alone to the swimming pool, shed his clothes, left his eyeglasses on the tiled edge, and thrown himself into the illuminated blue water. This, too, had happened in Mexico—Tijuana, San Diego's dark twin, the news drifting up to the States on a Sunday afternoon. It was Teddy, too, who'd gone south by bus to recover the body, to bring it and the family station wagon back across the border.

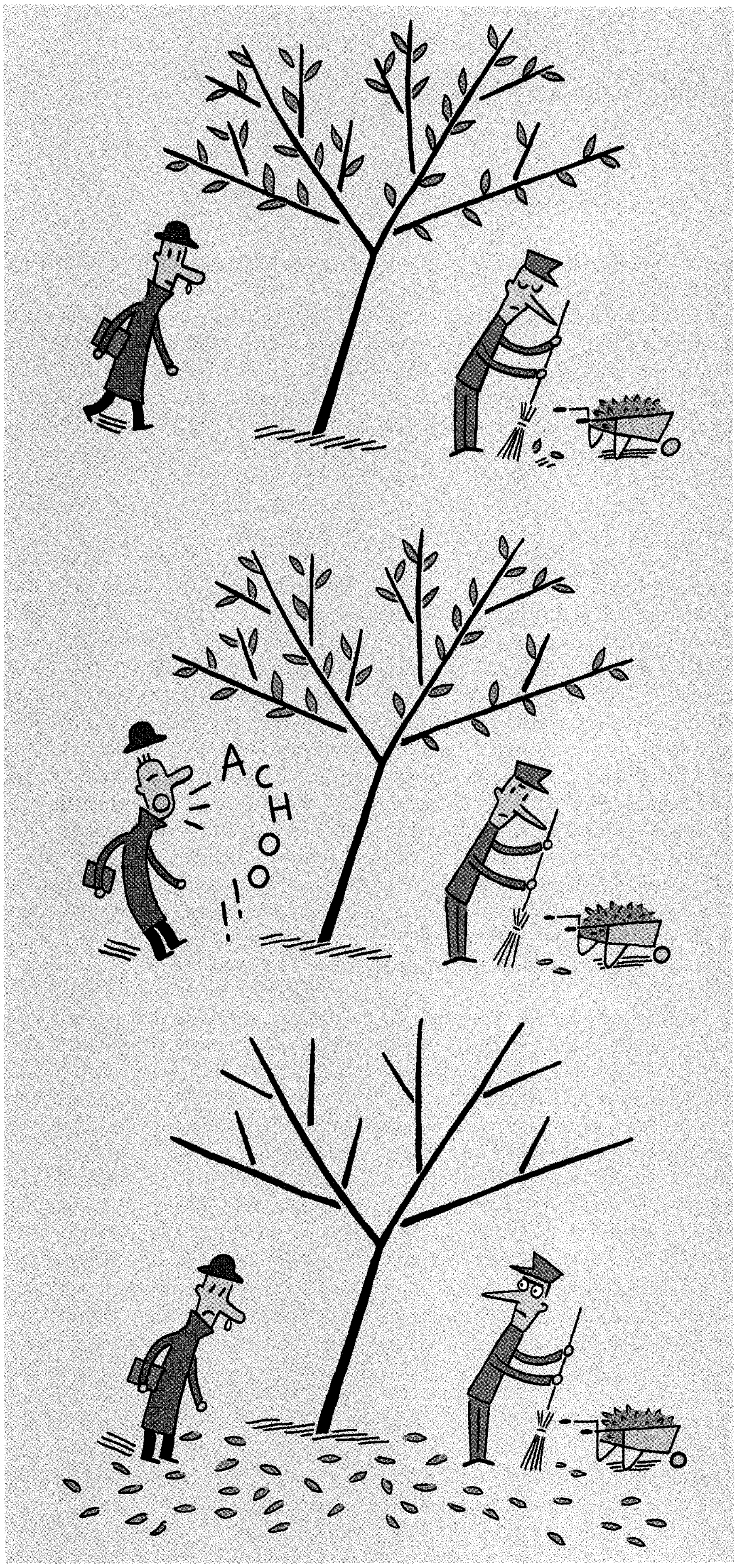
In the aftermath, he had collapsed into mourning. Wretched in a San Diego psych ward, he had waited for clarity while his friends finished college, married, finagled jobs, and became parents, fulfilling their contracts as adults. But Julia's future husband's dramatic undoing was followed by an equally impressive reassembly. By the time he stepped out of the bin and back into the world, restored, he had developed an unswerving internal compass, one that hovered perpetually at moral magnetic north. Unlike his friends, he had legitimately grown up. He and Julia had met soon after that, sharing classes as students in a public-health program. Once he had fixed his gaze on her, he never lifted it.

Home in L.A., two weeks after Mexico, Julia waited for a cashier at Walgreens, a pack of cigarettes in one hand, a pregnancy test in the other. Such a *dumb* problem, she thought, unworthy of her, interesting nevertheless.

The line was moving slowly, and a party waited for her back at her house. She'd pulled away from the hoopla without anyone's noticing. It was that kind of party—raucous, sodden, oblivious. The boys were safely asleep, each with an arm around the neck of a dog who wouldn't let any drunken degenerates defile them. The girl was happily turning pages as Teddy held forth at the grand piano, thoroughly in his element and three sheets to the wind. His friends—students, other professors, secretaries, the whole democratic entourage from the community college where he taught—stayed later than Julia's colleagues from Fidelity Pharmaceuticals, the few who'd put in polite appearances in expensive black clothing and then coolly slid away for their late dates, their real deals. Even if they'd stayed, Julia wouldn't have had fun; she frequently felt alone at parties, especially her own. All those people, and no one to talk to. Martin would have been that one, and not only wasn't he there, he never would be.

The Walgreens cashier didn't blink at the purchases. She'd seen worse combinations, Julia told herself: Scotch and circus peanuts, condoms and electrical tape, diapers and kerosene, any number of pathetic binaries. Outside, beneath an awning, hung an unlit pay phone, one that Julia had used a few times to call Martin. But at his end of the country it was very late. Testing for pregnancy was as close to him as she was going to get tonight.

As she left the parking lot, she had to brake abruptly. A group of high-school girls, all carrying musical instruments, had bounded unthinkingly into the crosswalk, laughing, swinging their flute and cornet cases, bonking one another in the rear, strutting their pretty young bodies in the light of colored neon on a balmy Friday night. In a few years, Julia's daugh-



PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

ter would be their age, sixteen, seventeen. Billy the ghost had died at seventeen. Julia put her forehead to the steering wheel and suddenly wept. Trooper, her vehicle was named. Most of the time, Julia felt like a trouper, too, but not tonight. The sudden stop had reminded her of the crash in Cancún.

"Is this safe?" she'd asked, joking, as they climbed into a replacement car from the rental agency—a Mirage. But Martin was not in any mood to make light of the accident. He wanted to analyze it, explain how it had happened, again and again. This meant that he had to turn his attention repeatedly from the road to Julia's face, to remove his hands from the wheel to punctuate, to show the distances between lanes. "Did *you* see anything in the road?" he demanded. This was the first time that Julia had seen him flummoxed. It didn't suit him. She was trying to adopt the attitude of the old Mexican painter: "Is only a thing." Nobody killed, not even particularly hurt. Money was involved, but not much; Martin was nothing if not insured. Mostly it was his youthful masculine pride that was damaged, and his annoyance served only to remind Julia that her husband was a better man, milder, steadier during disaster.

If she'd died, if she'd been seriously injured, how would it have been explained back home? How to account for the active aimless sperm still inside her? All these guilty problems, unkindnesses that might outlive her. And what pitiless irony, her husband sent once more to Mexico on a gruesome errand.

"Cars should be named other things," she told Martin brightly. "The Ford Spanky. Or Wanderlust, the Volkswagen van. A convertible Picaresque, with tail fins."

"And you would be targeting what demo group?" he asked, taking a curve too fast.

"The whimsical," she said, clutching the side door handle with her right hand, the shoulder belt over her breast with her left. "Somebody should throw more bones to the whimsical."

When she returned to her house, alive and ordinary, she got rid of any evidence of Martin's presence in her life—letters, tidbits, all of it, trash in a landfill somewhere now. Only the first office voicemail remained, secured these three years in its electronic vault, the combination encrypted in Julia's private set of lucky numbers. When she was lonely, when she wanted to be reminded of why she loved him, she revisited his message and the virgin urge he'd had to reach her. On and on he stumbled, a long and lovely pratfall.

Martin's daughter played the flute, Julia remembered a few days later. That, too, could account for the crying at Walgreens. She had once heard the girl play, over the long-distance line, a thin sad song in the background at Martin's Manhattan apartment. It had sounded like a professional recording. Satie, that mope. Nothing had made the atmosphere of that apartment clearer to Julia, as she stood in a radiantly warm L.A. parking lot. Martin's sadness—taken up in the daughter's perfect lonely performance. His restlessness and duty struggled in the confinement of the vertical city while Julia's sprawled in the horizontal one. Strangers in strange cars rushing by, children playing sad songs on flutes, love in its inimitable, baffling shades. Her affair seemed both random and fated; perfectly scripted and half-baked.

She wasn't pregnant.

The next time she and Martin rendezvoused, two months later, they rented an Intrigue. "Why not a Dullsville?" Julia suggested in the rental lot of the Denver International Airport. She laid her head on Martin's shoulder. "Those auto execs think like us," she said, meaning Fidelity Pharmaceuticals, its reps who understood the sexy significance of names. It was Julia who'd dreamed up the name Hydra for the miracle anti-inflammatory that also softened your stool, improved your mood, lowered your blood pressure, and didn't eat away your intestinal lining. "It sounds as pure as water," Martin had said gleefully, "but means a riot of snakes!" For the remainder of Hydra's promising patented life, he and Julia would be able to meet at exotic locales all over the world, selling their many-headed product to millions of sufferers. The future of her affair felt secure, like money in the bank or a non-generic painkilling wonder drug.

"Martin," she'd said at the gate. She loved to say his name. He covered her ears with his hands, put his lips to the part in her hair, speaking her name into her skull. In the car, she couldn't look at him—he was too much to take in. She watched the landscape fly by, plains, plains, plains, then suddenly mountains, over to the west.

"You mustn't hiss," Martin warned as they merged onto the beltway. He owned no car in New York, so he did all of the driving, jerkily and too fast. In Julia's real life she and Teddy shared fifty-fifty. They shared the driving and they shared their money. Martin pinched pennies; left ten-per-cent tips. He'd grown up poor and never lost his fear of ending up that way again. It surprised Julia to learn of the financial arrangements that prevailed at his home, the arguments between him and his wife about who would pay for what aspect of their daughter's existence. The girl was being tutored in everything—languages, dance, religion, art, etiquette, test-taking—a life the likes of which Julia's daughter would never know. Using scissors and scraps, Julia's daughter made costumes for stuffed bunnies, sang country-and-Western songs at the top of her lungs, strung shiny beads on thread, gave loving names to the kitchen appliances. Julia's family was impossibly impromptu next to Martin's, lumpy, lacking manners and vigilance and sharp facial features. Three children were too many. Martin took the global position: negative population growth. One child for every two parents.

When, five years earlier, Julia had announced her third pregnancy, she'd been met with a kind of slack-jawed wonder. Her friends and relatives had suddenly realized that she might never stop having babies. But Teddy adored his children; now that the youngest was in Montessori, he had started rallying for more. His calling, this fatherhood for which he'd been in training since the birth of his little brother, had come to claim him fully. Now in his care were not only children but students, that steady parade of need, as well as colleagues, neighbors, readers of his letters to the editor. When describing their life, his and Julia's, he habitually used the plural pronoun, but Julia didn't feel as though she played much of a role. She had carried the children and she had decorated the house, but Teddy was the loadbearing member. He stayed there steady as Atlas while Julia flew away. Her salary was triple his, which was how she justified her transient relationship with her home and children, her *business travel.* When they cried at her departure, she promised gifts. Over the phone, she assured them that she loved them, applying many terms of endearment: "Monkey, Sweetness, Moonpie."

It was her daughter, Billie, who'd recently looked up from homework hour at the kitchen table to note in a woebegone way that she and her brothers spent more time with their teachers than with their mother.

"Not literally," Julia said.

"Literally," repeated the youngest boy dreamily, the one with the most words to learn.

The Fidelity convention was in Boulder. The conference rooms were climate-controlled, the personnel identically outfitted no matter where they were—Mexican beach, European castle, Alpine ski slope. But here in Colorado everyone seemed smugly healthy, in mind and body, which made Julia crave fast food and cigarettes. She didn't want to step outside because it was too beautiful, the air so painfully clean her eyes watered. This suited Martin, who simply wanted to fuck. And it was simple fucking. Less complicated than sex with Teddy, because Martin didn't care if she had a good time or not. Teddy cared desperately, and would do anything to insure her pleasure, even if it meant sacrificing his own. Teddy had long ago discovered how to make Julia respond; it was an odd kind of power, and Julia faintly resented his possession of it. Martin, however, was a selfish lover, indifferent to her even as they mashed together face to face, chest to chest, toe to toe, and that struck Julia as a strange relief. While he labored away, she let herself daydream.

"I'm pregnant," she said when he'd finished. A bold lie. She supposed she was looking for proof of his character, support for the thesis that he was worth loving, and possibly ruining her life for. But, like the car accident months before, the idea appeared to obsess him only with his own significance.

"Shit!" he exclaimed, frown lines crimping his smooth forehead, just under his thick, alarmed-looking hair. "How pregnant?" He didn't ask if the baby was his; his arrogance prevented the question from entering his head.

Would her husband have been so obtuse? No. But her husband would have said something worse in his delight, tossing new names into the air—a boy's! a girl's! two of each in case there were twins!

"That's what we call a forced-choice question," Julia said to Martin dryly. "Mexico."

They suddenly wanted out of the hotel room. Blinking like bats, they each took a cellular phone underneath different manicured spruce trees on the hotel grounds and made discreet calls home to check on their families, the new false weight of their relationship sending them running to their other obligations.

"Honey?" her husband said carefully, "Honey?" and Julia's heart lurched, all idiocy evaporated. He was going to say something awful. One of her children was dead, injured, lost. Or he'd found out that she was not alone. In his voice, Julia heard her punishment. She'd pushed her luck too far this time.

"What?" she said, moving toward and then away from Martin, her free hand fluttering before her as if to erase something—to erase it before it even existed. "What is it?"

"We're fine," Teddy said soothingly, deliberately. "We are one-hundred-

VISITING THE DEAD

The way down was difficult enough
without wondering what I would find,
the river of years having grown wider,
the jars of blood threatening to spill over,
rows of the long unburied spitting curses,
the purebred to be slaughtered and salted
twice bolting, the fragile stick figures
in my pack jammed in with the mirrors
and strigils, the herbs and honey cups—
whatever gift might become the gift of speech.

Near the end, I shaved my head and wore
a necktie, hoping he would recognize me.
Gradually, from behind a shooting fall
of soot, my father appeared, a decade gone.
He edged closer, expressionless,
gaunt, pomaded, a thin mustache
he'd acquired since, and on his chest
the lump where his pacemaker still ticked.
The featherweight of loss we bear
isn't often now in my dreams—where I want

once more to warn him a rock is giving way,
or drag him choking from the neighbor's pool—
but here he is. Photographs of him as a boy—
I have one in my kit—are myself to the life,
as he might as well be standing here, given
a few more years, a few more bad decisions.
Could I tell him I loved him? Could I ever?
He was the reason I was there, the reason
I had first entered and finally left the world.
I reached to embrace him and closed my arms on air.

—*J. D. McClatchy*

per-cent fine, but there was a break-in here at the house."

"A break-in?"

"Through Billie's bedroom window. Someone came in while we were gone."

In the tone he used to calm a crying child or a churlish student, Teddy told the story. Someone—someone small—had broken and then crawled through the casement window the night before. Teddy and the children had been at Knott's Berry Farm when it happened. They'd come home to find the doors swinging in a brisk Santa Ana wind and the three floppy-eared, dumb dogs loose in the park across the street.

"The fish, however . . ." Teddy sighed. In addition to the dead tetras, they had found a trail of gang insignia spray-painted on the walls, winding from Billie's bedroom to Julia and Teddy's, where the aerosol had apparently run dry. Detours of destruction had been made in every room between: the fridge unloaded, the silverware tray upended, two gas burners left on high, paintings slashed, and the sofa gutted. Billie's bedroom had been thoroughly trashed, drawers dumped, stuffed animals stabbed, nail polish poured on the floor, whiskey on the bed, motor oil on the curtains—as if in preparation for a lit match.

Julia was stunned. "Who would do this?"

"I don't know. I've been trying to remember if I failed anybody recently, some vengeful student." He had no enemies, her husband, none that he knew of.

Julia's mind spanned the western half of the nation, situating herself the night before—as if providing an alibi—in Colorado, in her hotel room, at the time of the crime. She and Martin, propped up on pillows, eating from a service cart. "Tell me one more time," she said, pressing her free hand against her other ear as if to fill her mind with what he was describing. Teddy obliged.

"Oh, yeah," he interrupted himself. "This is the really strange thing. On our bed, someone laid out your underwear, arranged like it was on somebody. Panties and a bra and hose. Black," he added. "I guess they're yours." He didn't know because he'd never seen her wear them. One of two sets she'd bought when her sex life had drifted beyond that room; the other was on her body right now. Shame flushed through Julia, a wave so powerful she had to sit down on the grass. Her house raided, its closets and cupboards struck with ill will, a vicious bushwhacking tour of mayhem, ending, it seemed, with the flimsy silhouette on her bed.

The locks had been changed already, the window covered with plywood. The claim rep had visited, and a cleaning crew was coming in the morning. Teddy told Julia that he had promised their daughter a new comforter and curtains, plush toys and books and CDs and posters. "And white mice," he added.

"Of course," Julia said vaguely. She could see Martin, under his tree across the lawn, talking seriously but with only half his attention into his cell phone, sucking from his sport bottle of Scotch-and-water, his legs flexed—point, relax, point, relax—in a cyclist's stretch. He was always multitasking. His brain had compartments. She was in one of them.

"The dogs are O.K.?" she asked for the second time, her own sport bottle forgotten, leaking on the ground.

"Everything is fine," Teddy repeated. "We're all sleeping in the big bed together."

In the end, Julia felt spared. She was shaking because she was cold, she realized, nothing more. It was November in Colorado, after all.

"I love you," Teddy said. "Tell Mommy we love her," he called to the children, who echoed the sentiment, a three-voice chorus.

Julia withheld the news from Martin. All through the long weekend, she bravely didn't mention it, instead listening to him fret over his daughter's prep-school applications, which required essays and shot records and a cumulative G.P.A. and an *astronomical* nonrefundable down payment, and, as if that weren't enough, there was his secretary, whom he would have to fire because her multiple sclerosis was finally too debilitating to ignore. Could he really be expected to perform her job as well as his own? He paced, he ranted, he anticipated the fallout. Stewing over these problems was aging him in ways that

"Can I buy you a house?"

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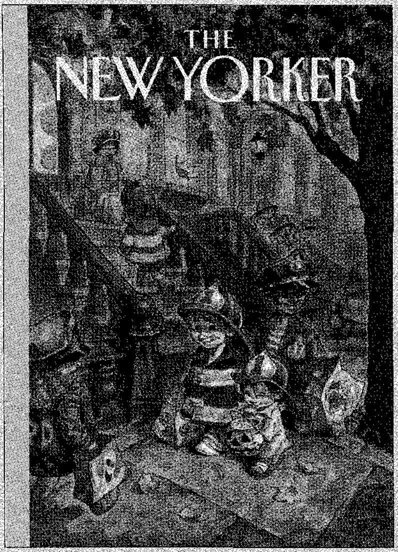

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Julia suspected he welcomed, little worry lines at his temples and mouth, proof of his influence and manhood.

Meanwhile, the chronology of the vandalism in L.A. whirled in Julia's head like a shaken snow globe, from breaking glass through eventual departure, those doors swinging in the Santa Ana wind.

"December in the city?" Martin said, at the airport, already glancing over Julia's shoulder, on to his next appointment.

"December," Julia confirmed. The annual Christmas party was where they'd met three years before. She said what she always did when they parted: "This might be our last kiss." And he looked at her, as always, with warmth, knowing that he would not have to extend the benevolence longer than this momentary farewell in a public airport.

"It's only a thing," Julia told Teddy, recalling the Mexican painter as she regarded their belongings.

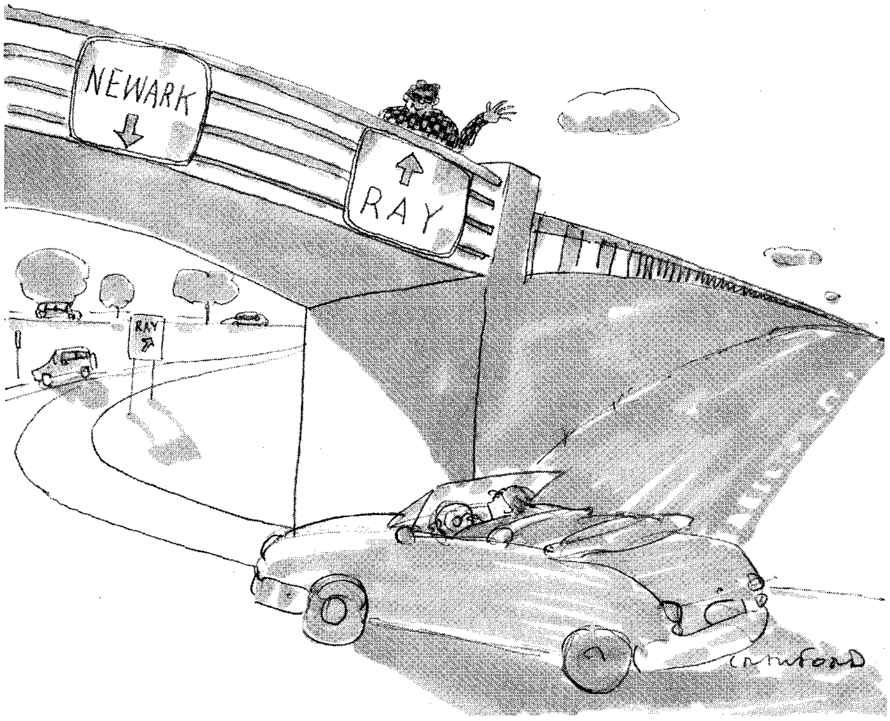
"Well, several things," her mild husband had responded, standing amid the wreckage. But he wasn't as aware of *things* as Julia was, and when she returned home she had to revise the list he'd made for the police and State Farm, enumerating the strangely modest items that the thieves had taken, the list oddly long.

And odder what they'd left behind: the insignia on the living-room wall bothered Julia, a mysterious metallic-blue symbol, calligraphic and deranged, a snake in a Celtic knot, swallowing its own tail, and yet something less specific than that. How could the vandals be so talented with paint, so artful, and yet still so bent on destruction? Julia found an old can of paint, left over from the last time she and Teddy had done the walls, and, like the Mexican graffiti-coverer, she found herself tracing atop the markings, moving her arm in an approximation of what the intruders had done, following the devious twists with her own brush. But the blue spray paint bled through, the image emerging in creepy shadow fashion, like a bruise surfacing on flesh. Professional painters finally had to come and sand the wall, gouge it, prime it, restore it.

It was her neighbor, Linda, who pointed out the other tagging. This was in Julia's sitting porch, where the two women looked out over the sludgy L.A. skyline, drinking wine, before their children came clamoring home from school. The vandals had not done much damage to this room, dull as it was, with rocking chairs and fringed lamps, an absence of electronics and a preponderance of books. Here, the women discussed their love affairs, Linda's former one, Julia's current one—trading off, living vicariously, taking turns. "Look," Linda said suddenly. The smog had shifted and sunlight beamed briefly into the room, illuminating what had previously been invisible: there in the corner, eye level with a wicker shelf, a set of shining images. An empty can of spray fixative had been found after the break-in. And here was what had become of that transparent aerosol: hidden pictures on Julia's walls. You could see them only in certain kinds of light, at certain angles. These, like the conversations in this room, Julia shared with no one but Linda.

The thieves were girls, it turned out, fourteen-year-old gang wannabes. Having no vehicle in which to haul their bounty, they'd made off with backpacks—hence the portability of what was missing. They got busted just around the block a few weeks later, crawling out of another casement window with a litter of whimpering Chihuahuas in a soup pot. They confessed to everything, being girls, sobbing and sorry, one of them with a pierced eyebrow, a gold cross winking there. Everything that had been stolen—other than a few children's videotapes and some jewelry—was recovered. Even the puppies came through unscathed.

Billie went with Julia to the police station to recover the family's belongings, housed there as evidence. Together, they examined the heavy plastic bags. There were objects there that Julia didn't remember owning, things she might



have been nostalgic for if she'd noticed their absence. To the uninterested cop who delivered them, she said, "These are my kids' teeth." They rattled like pills in an old Fidelity sample bottle. Why would you steal them? Julia wondered. The cop was probably wondering why you would keep them.

"And you told us it was the tooth fairy!" Billie said, grinning.

Teeth: parts of her children, and yet not, as expendable as the tails of lizards. Her husband had saved his dead brother's glasses, those smudged lenses that had watched poolside as the boy threw himself away. Kept now in a leather snapcase in Teddy's sock drawer. For a second, Julia grew dizzy, the pill bottle clutched in her hand—had she checked at home for the snapcase?

"It's just teeth," Billie said dismissively, already back to the bags, searching for her CDs.

Another recovered object was the audiotape Teddy had made of each of the children promising to clean up dog shit if they could please please please get a dog. They'd feed and water and walk and scoop. *Oh, please, Daddy, please.* Three times he'd done this—not that he'd ever use their words against them. He was easily amused, her husband, charmed by simple pleasures. Such was the way with people who were on track.

" 'Please' is the beg word," Martin had once told Julia, sniffily. He himself never used it. He hadn't taught his daughter to use it, either, a fact of which he was absurdly proud.

"How about 'sorry'?" Julia had asked.

On the way home from the police station, she popped Teddy's old tape in the Trooper's cassette deck and heard her children, years before, pleading, making a promise they wouldn't keep to a man who wouldn't hold them to it.

"She had *her* affair," Martin had told Julia, meaning his wife. It had happened before their daughter was born, and was sufficient excuse, he felt, for his carrying on with Julia. His wife, he claimed, knew about them in some corner of her self. Not the conscious one, of course; he was far too discreet. But, in his opinion, they were finally achieving equilibrium. He felt entitled. A lot of his character was marked by his confidence, his overt sense of self-worth. He was quick and decisive and very handsome—so handsome and fit that Julia often felt frumpy beside him; then she soothed herself with the knowledge that his wife was unquestionably homely. He'd married her for her *mind*, he'd told

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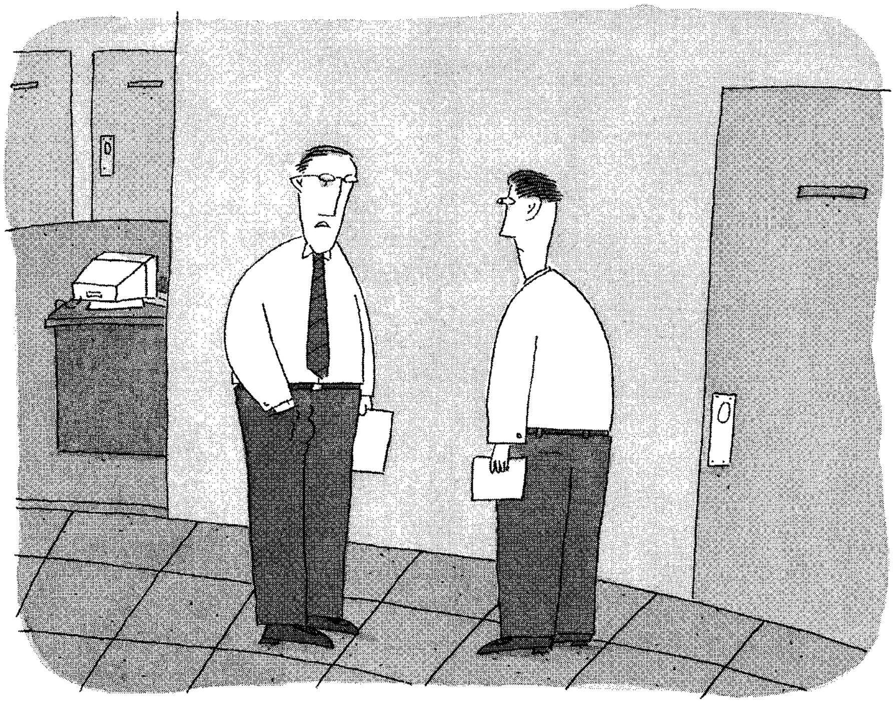
Julia piously. The sole photograph Julia possessed of Martin was on page 14 of the 1998 Fidelity newsletter, a legitimate document to have floating around the house. There was something misleadingly breezy in his smile. With his cleft chin, clear eyes, even teeth, he could have been a movie star. Pharmaceutical representation had been only one of many available careers. Elegant, nervous, streamlined Martin, the man to whom Julia could not fully explain her messy left-coast life. Not that he asked her to.

He *did* enjoy hearing what Julia's therapist had determined about their affair, feeling, naturally, superior to diagnosis. With a few drinks in him, he could be enticed into skewering their colleagues at Fidelity Pharm; he possessed such an elastic and mean imagination that he caricatured brilliantly, chillingly. Julia named this trait edginess; her husband did not possess it. With edginess, however, came the edge—over which you might fall. Julia trod lightly.

Concerning her husband Martin held vague and charitable views. The dead brother, the psychotic break, the lesser career, the tendency toward beer and television sports and a spare tire. *Sentimental slob*, he seemed to have decided, *poor bastard;* the community-college teaching job, in Martin's opinion, was of the "those who can't" variety. Simple logic dictated that Julia would need more, other, opposite. What Martin didn't understand, she thought, was that he wasn't really opposite. He wasn't the same as Teddy, true—and no one but Julia would see the similarity, the fact that he was, like her husband, dedicated to the life he'd made, tight as a tick with his confidence in its value. And attracted, apparently, to someone like Julia. Moreover, if Martin knew Teddy, if he were Teddy's friend, for instance, singing around the piano, playing with his children, then he wouldn't be able to sleep with Julia. Period. That was the kind of men they were. Julia, mistress and wife, alone understood the essential, mutual ignorance.

Only after Martin had asked, three separate times over the phone, inflecting each of the simple words differently—"How *are* you? How are *you*? *How* are you?"—did she recall that he still believed her pregnant. In the aftermath of the vandalism, she'd forgotten to miscarry.

On the way home from the police station, she and Billie sat, stuck in traffic. In the pile of recovered loot, Billie had found her old key ring. A real ring with real keys that she



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had collected as a toddler: skeleton keys, old house keys, skate keys, luggage keys, any random key that was no longer of real use. Having a key ring made her feel like one of the big people. She’d gone around unlocking everything, dishwashers and kittens and tangerines.

“Some of this stuff isn’t mine,” Billie said now, shaking the set. She showed Julia a baby-bottle-shaped eraser token that, on closer investigation, proved to be a small pink penis. And there was a silver key, thick, square, with the instruction not to duplicate it on one side and the number 818 on the other.

Eight hundred and eighteen was the number of the hotel room that Julia and Martin had shared in Cancún, in September, back when they could have accidentally made a baby. This couldn’t be that key, because that key had been a card—two cards, actually, one for Julia, one for Martin, kept as souvenirs, then discarded with all the other evidence of her love affair. Discarded in case she was killed, discarded in case someone was charged with investigating her life after it was over. In case she had the power to ambush her husband and children from afar, the power held in objects, mute and inscrutable things.

“Do you think you could find the lock, if you wanted to?” her daughter asked.

“Doubtful,” she said.

“I bet I could find it,” Billie said. Julia looked at the girl. At the station, one of the cops had stared at Billie, running his appraising male eyes up and down her slim body before casting a glance in Julia’s direction. Julia flashed back to the odd arrangement of underwear on her bed, the seeming import of it, in the topsy-turvy house—a message, if someone cared to receive it.

Billie, scrutinizing now the third of the mystery objects on her key ring, a long, old-fashioned brass key with something etched on it, announced her findings: “Sally Cummins. I know her.” It was one of the fourteen-year-old thieves.

“You know her?”

“I know her.”

“How could you know her?” Julia asked. But Billie wasn’t going to say. She gazed defiantly into her mother’s face. She resembled her father, with only one obvious feature of Julia’s, her slightly wide nose. Her nostrils flared now, almost imperceptibly, the breathing flex of will, like a thoroughbred’s just before its race. If traffic hadn’t shifted at precisely that second—brake lights flashing off, movement, horns—Julia might have been able to get her talking. But the moment passed.

Her daughter’s secret was safe, Julia thought, and so was hers. She loved a man who was not her husband, a situation against which she was ceaselessly building a case, collecting data that proved her own mistake, only to neglect it, disassemble it willingly again and again. Soon she would have to have an imaginary miscarriage or abortion. Either way, she had to undo what she had done, even if it was only in Martin’s mind that she had done it. There was Martin—whose existence often felt invented, as if Julia, like a child, had dreamed up an imaginary friend with whom to share her life, this man she loved who lived strictly separate from the sunshine and shimmering asphalt around her, who had yet to be notified of the nonexistent fate of a nonexistent fetus—and there was her now teen-age daughter beside her, whose former voice promised on tape to clean up after the puppy she dreamed of owning. And there was Martin’s unseen daughter and her dooming superiority on the flute, and those girls who’d nonchalantly carried their instruments after playing them at a high-school concert one night when Julia had imagined that she was really pregnant, and then there was the strange girl named Sally who’d crawled into her house, uninvited, to steal and ransack and mark.

I know her, Julia would remember her daughter saying, whenever those transparent images left on her sitting-porch walls reappeared, ghostly whisperings—*Pssst*—in the rare right light for many years to come. They would outlive her children’s childhoods. They would outlive her puzzling love for Martin. They were outlines of hearts, strangely enough, something that any girl, good or bad, might idly draw, sloppy valentines to remind Julia of other lies she believed. ♦

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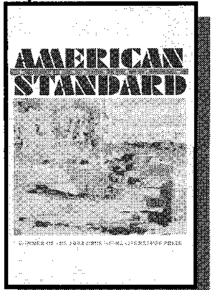

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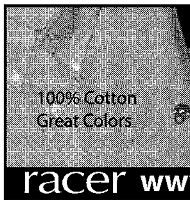

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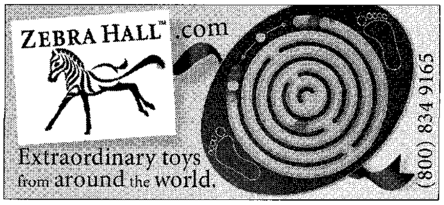
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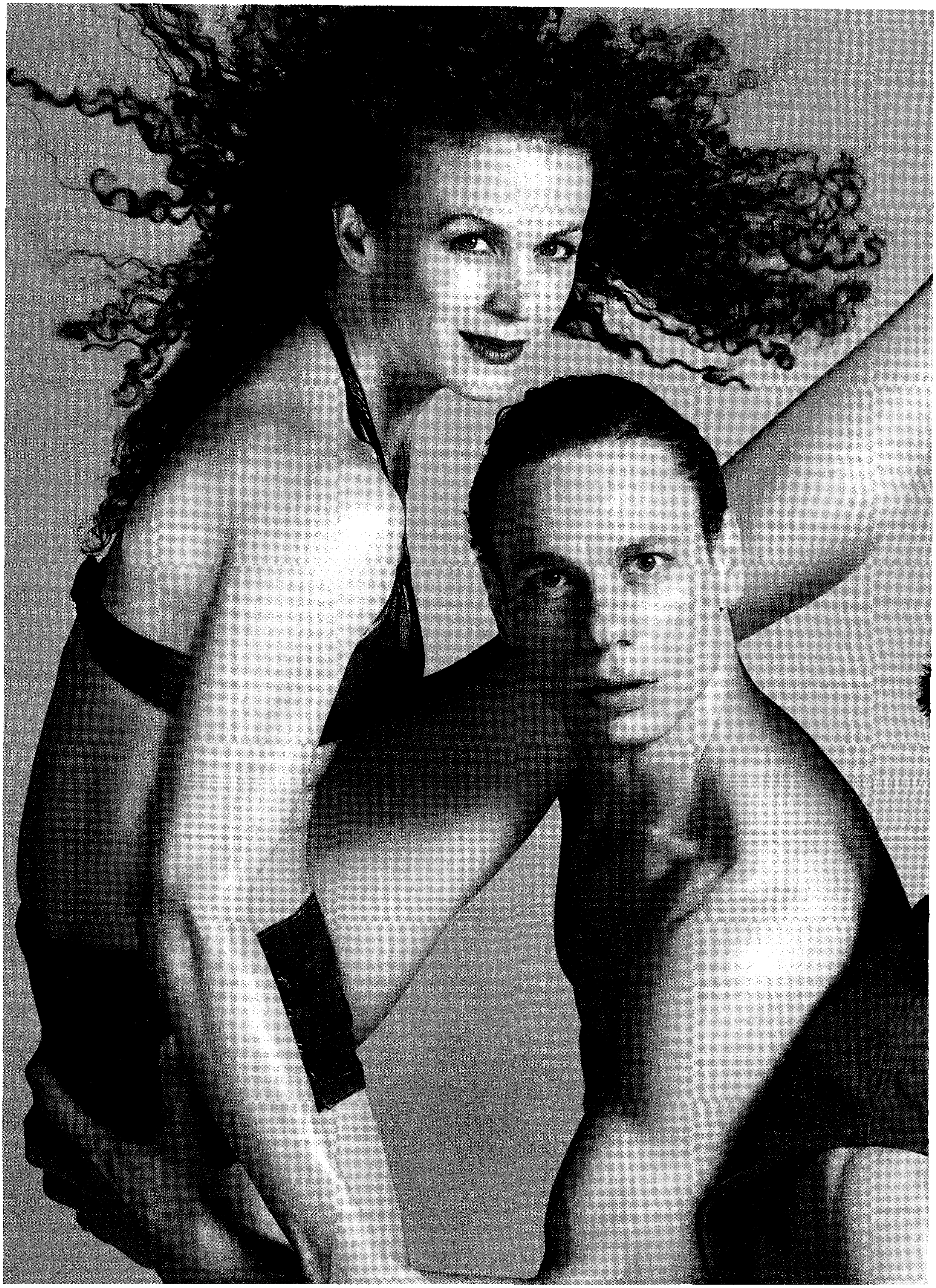

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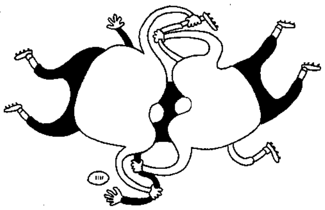


DANCING

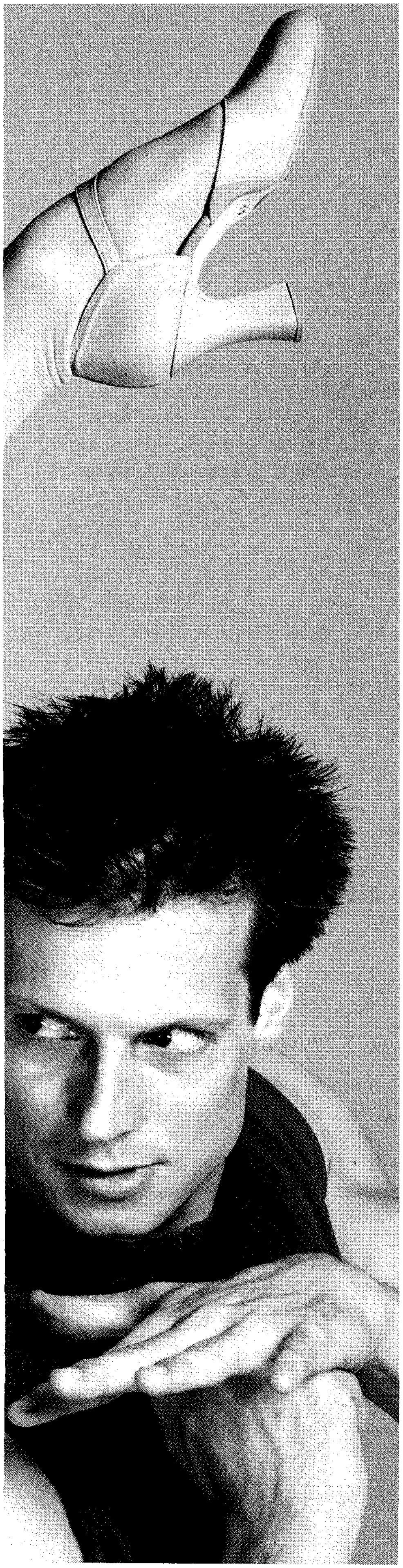
CRAZY EDDIE'S

Twyla Tharp's "Movin' Out."

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

Throughout her career, which is now almost forty years long, Twyla Tharp has been thinking about America, and also about teen-agers, who, in their recalcitrance and idealism, and in their gum-snapping cool, seem to be, for her, the primary repositories of the American soul. Ever since the seventies, she has been choreographing dances to pop music, but not to the exclusion of "art" music. She combined the two, or switched back and forth between them, just as, in her choreography, she mixed high styles—modern dance and classical ballet—with various sock-hop forms.

In this fascination with the high-low formula, Tharp was true to her generation—she started out in the sixties—and when others of that generation got tired of the formula she didn't. High-low is fundamental to her, her defining trait, related, I am sure, both to her brooding on America and to her personality. (As her 1992 autobiography, "Push Comes to Shove," makes clear, she is intensely ambitious, and does not welcome the idea that she might have to give up one thing for another.) She didn't just embrace popular styles; she sought popular venues. She made television programs; she choreographed for the movies ("Hair," "Amadeus," "Ragtime"); in 1985 she directed a Broadway musical, "Singin' in the Rain." Even when she wasn't doing a musical, she wanted to be on Broadway, and staged her company's dance seasons there when she could



PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

Elizabeth Parkinson (as Brenda), Keith Roberts (as Tony), and John Selya (as Eddie) dance to Billy Joel's songs.

HI! I WAS JANE
HI! I WAS MARY
HI! I WAS BOB
HI! I WAS FRED
HI! I WAS JOAN
HI! I WAS FRAN
NICK DOWNES

• •

afford to. In this sense, she is actually more a product of the fifties. Like the old *Life* magazine, like "educational television"—and not like the alienated vanguard of the sixties—she thought that ordinary people should enjoy art, or her art.

In view of this history, it is no surprise that Tharp has just unveiled, at the Richard Rodgers Theatre, a show about America and teen-agers that is set to pop music—twenty-seven songs by Billy Joel. The surprise is something else: that the show, called "Movin' Out," after one of Joel's hits, has no dialogue, even though it has a fairly bulky plot to carry. Taking her names and her images from Joel's lyrics, Tharp has woven a story of five ordinary teens living in Hicksville, Long Island—a reference to Joel's home town—in the sixties. As Act I opens, Brenda and Eddie are going steady (see Joel's "Scenes from an Italian Restaurant"). But Brenda dumps Eddie, whereupon Tony moves in on her. Meanwhile, a "good" couple, Judy and James, are having a nice, cuddly, normal romance. No sooner are all these pieces put in place than they are blown apart, by the war in Vietnam. Eddie, Tony, and James are drafted. James is killed—only the good die young—and Eddie and Tony are wrecked mentally. When they get home, Tony wants no part of Brenda, and Eddie doesn't want anything but drugs. Thus concludes Act I. In Act II, Tony and Brenda put it back together. Eddie hits bottom and comes back up. At the end, some Christmas lights are hung from the flies, Eddie opens a bottle of champagne, and he and his friends are O.K. again, except that their youth is gone.

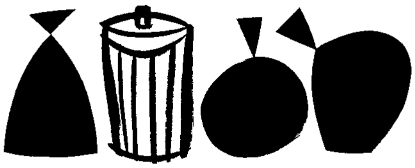
All of this unfolds in song and dance alone. Accordingly, when the show opened for tryouts this past summer in Chicago, some reviewers complained that they couldn't understand the plot. Tharp then overhauled Act I, but she didn't add any dialogue. In larger ways, too, her approach remains unconventional. The story is supposed to be archetypal, like a song lyric. Take Joel's "Uptown Girl," which is used in the show. In the lyric, we're told that the girl is from uptown and is looking for a boy from downtown, but that's about all we find out, and all we need to find out. The situation is standard-issue. Likewise Tharp's Hicksville. "It's supposed to look like your small town," she told an interviewer. "Not Billy Joel's, not mine, but yours." Breaking up is hard to do, in whatever locality. And Vietnam vets had a difficult reëntry no matter where they lived. To portray these experiences, we don't need narrative logic: plot and character. We need lyric logic: song and dance.

This is a brave choice on Tharp's part, and it doesn't altogether work. Your average song lasts about three minutes. For that amount of time, we can stay interested in the uptown girl. But "Movin' Out" lasts two hours, and eventually we do find ourselves asking: Why did Brenda break up with Eddie? How did Eddie recover? Did he go to rehab? A bigger problem with the wordless approach is that, by forcing Tharp to keep her story simple, it makes her too simple. What are supposed to be archetypes sometimes teeter over into cliché. When Eddie overdoses in a local bar, the visions he sees—the other denizens snaking around in masks and hot pants—look a lot like the folks in that orgy scene in "Eyes Wide Shut." Tharp, if I'm not mistaken, senses the problem, so she sends in another would-be archetype, a sort of avenging fury—the grieving Judy, in a tattered black tunic, who rages around with a corps of sister hags and kicks Eddie in the face, presumably to recall him to higher values. This is a very silly moment. We sit there and wait for it to be over. But what follows isn't much better. In place of any explanation of Eddie's return to sanity, we just get a sort of huggy scene of "recovery." Tharp has a weakness for pop psychology; so, in his lyrics, does Joel. You forget that until this scene.

Yet the things that Tharp is counting on, the music and the dance, do indeed keep the show afloat much of the time. If you like Billy Joel, you will probably like "Movin' Out." The ten-piece band, led by the excellent, relaxed Michael Cavanaugh (Wade Preston, in the second cast, is even better), performs on a platform that is alternately raised and lowered at the back of the stage. The musicians are very hot. Broadway audiences adore familiar music, and from the minute the band started up—with "It's Still Rock and Roll to Me," natch—the people around me were bouncing up and down in their seats.

Then there was the dancing. At this point, Tharp needs no arguing for as a choreographer. She is the most inventive dance-maker of her generation, and her crossing of classical ballet with popular forms, which in other hands might have been tendentious ("We'll show those ballet snobs")—and, come to think of it, was a little tendentious, once, even in her hands—has by now yielded her a full, eloquent, and unselfconscious language. When Eddie, who is a car mechanic, does a grande pirouette à la seconde, it doesn't look put on; it looks beautiful, and makes him noble and important, the same way it would in "Swan Lake." And when, at the onset of his delirium, he drops to the floor and, like a break dancer, turns five revolutions upside down in the air on the base of his left shoulder, that, too, seems perfectly appropriate. Many of the numbers in "Movin' Out" are closely related to dances Tharp has made before—the three acrobatic duets for Tony and Brenda could have come straight out of the 1982 "Nine Sinatra Songs"—but that's her right. She has a style; she goes on using it; God bless her. And, actually, Tony and Brenda's getting-back-together duet, to Joel's "Shameless," is not like anything she's done before. It is more fevered—a dance of *crazy* love. At its end, Tony goes down on his knees to Brenda; she, in turn, squats down unprettily and embraces his chest with her knees. (This doesn't look dirty; it looks affectionate.) He grabs her and more or less wipes her across his body. They exit in a big, disorderly, sweaty, ecstatic heap.

But we've known for a long time that Tharp could make love duets. The revelation in this show is that she can also do dramatic dances, numbers that collect the emotions that have built in a scene, and nail them. At the end of Act I, the Hicksville boys have returned from the war. All the main characters are there in front of us, minus the dead James. Eddie and Tony stand stiffly at center stage. Brenda hovers on the sidelines. No one wants her anymore; no one wants love. Then Judy, in black, bourrées backward to stand between the two men. So Eddie and Tony will also be separated. Everyone will be alone, lost. The tableau looks like something out of a fourteenth-century religious painting.



Of all the choreographers I know, Tharp has the greatest knack for choosing dancers. She always hires the best people, and they perform better for her than they ever have for anyone else. The first-cast principals of "Movin' Out," all ballet-trained, are the members of her present, small dance company: John Selya, Keith Roberts, Benjamin Bowman, Ashley Tuttle, and Elizabeth Parkinson. They are superb, and they can act, too—a gift not invariably seen in good dancers. Parkinson made some sense of Brenda, which wasn't easy to do. (Holly Cruikshank, in the second cast, couldn't manage it.) Tuttle and Bowman, in the difficult, goody-goody roles of Judy and James, got you to love them for exactly what they were—for the pressed chinos, the pink dress, the engagement ring. Keith Roberts, as Tony, was the very picture of masculine innocence, his big, bared chest a kind of page on which, you knew, life's sorrows would be written. You wanted to rescue him—take him home, put him to bed. As for John Selya (Eddie), this utterly remarkable dancer languished for years in "character" roles—the drunken peasant, the prince's friend—at American Ballet Theatre. You watched him and you thought, Doesn't the administration notice that this guy is dancing harder than anybody else up there? Tharp noticed. I first saw "Movin' Out" with the second cast, and I thought that no one could possibly be better than that cast's Eddie, William Marrié. (The second-cast Tony, David Gomez, was also tremendous. Good as Tharp is with all dancers, she is best with men.) But Selya is different. Unlike Marrié, he banks his fires. He knows he is the center of the show, and he paces it carefully. In Act I, he concentrates on the quick, quizzical half moves that are Tharp's language for working-class troubles. Only in Act II does he explode, and even then he never goes purple. Even when he's doing something big, like a drug-induced psychosis, he is still doing something small, subtle. Tharp should thank her dancers. Then again, they should thank her. If Selya had stayed at A.B.T., he would have gained weight and lost hope. Now he is a star, which is what he should have been all along. But it took Tharp, and this imperfect but bold and serious show. ◆

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BOOKS

PAPER TIGER

Daniel Ellsberg's war.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

To anyone over a certain age (forty-five?), Daniel Ellsberg needs no introduction, but it would be quite a challenge to explain Ellsberg to someone who had never heard of him. There was this brilliant young man from the Midwest who in 1948 went to Harvard on a scholarship, studied economics, demonstrated great promise, and got inducted into the small, super-élite company of game theorists, whose lifework was to formulate and fine-tune an American deterrence policy that would insure that the Cold War never became a nuclear war. Ellsberg, enthusiastic about this calling, served in the Marine Corps and then went to work for the RAND Corporation, the Santa Monica beachfront consulting firm, where the best defense intellectuals thought the unthinkable. He had a Forrest Gump-like talent for popping up at key moments and for meeting historical figures. In 1964, he moved to Washington to work in the E Ring of Robert McNamara's Pentagon, just at the moment when it was determining Vietnam War policy. A year later, he went to Vietnam, where his guides in Saigon and the jungles and rice paddies of the surrounding countryside were General Edward Lansdale, the model for Pyle in Graham Greene's "The Quiet American," and Colonel John Paul Vann, the antihero of Neil Sheehan's "A Bright Shining Lie." Guns and jeeps and patrols and ambushes replaced memos and meetings and press conferences as the stuff of Ellsberg's routine.

On his return to the United States, in 1967, Ellsberg embarked on a peculiar life, travelling back and forth between the anti-war movement and the top level of the foreign-policy establishment. In the winter of 1968, he was called to the Hotel Pierre, in New York, by his old Harvard acquaintance Henry Kissinger to help the incoming Nixon Administration with its war planning. In the summer of 1969, while attending a conference on "Liberation and Revolution," he stood outside a Philadelphia post office at a vigil supporting a draft resister who was about to be sentenced. The following summer, Kissinger, on a visit to Richard Nixon's vacation home in San Clemente, summoned Ellsberg's friend Lloyd Shearer, of *Parade*, to advise him about the news management of his love life. Shearer brought along Ellsberg, whom Kissinger fobbed off on Alexander Haig so that he could speak privately with Shearer about the ins and outs of dating starlets. But, as Ellsberg was leaving, Kissinger invited him to come back for a talk—and Ellsberg cut short his honeymoon so that he could make it. One day in the spring of 1971, Ellsberg, in the company of Noam Chomsky and other friends, was teargassed by police in Washington for blocking traffic as part of an anti-war protest, then flew to New York so that he could hear McGeorge Bundy speak at the Council on Foreign Relations. Robert Kennedy, William Fulbright, and Clark Clifford were among the other eminences with whom Ellsberg had private meetings on Vietnam. When his anti-war activities made his position at RAND untenable, he left—only to be given a plummy international-relations fellowship at M.I.T.

What finally ended this double life, and made Ellsberg world famous rather than just well connected, was his decision to leak a seven-thousand-page history of how the Vietnam War was planned, which the Pentagon had prepared for internal use. Long excerpts appeared in the *Times*, beginning on June 13, 1971, and then in the Washington *Post* and several other newspapers. But this was the culmination of a campaign, as Ellsberg's fascinating new book, "Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers" (Viking; $29.95), explains. Years earlier, Ellsberg had begun surreptitiously peeping at secret government documents ("It was like opening the

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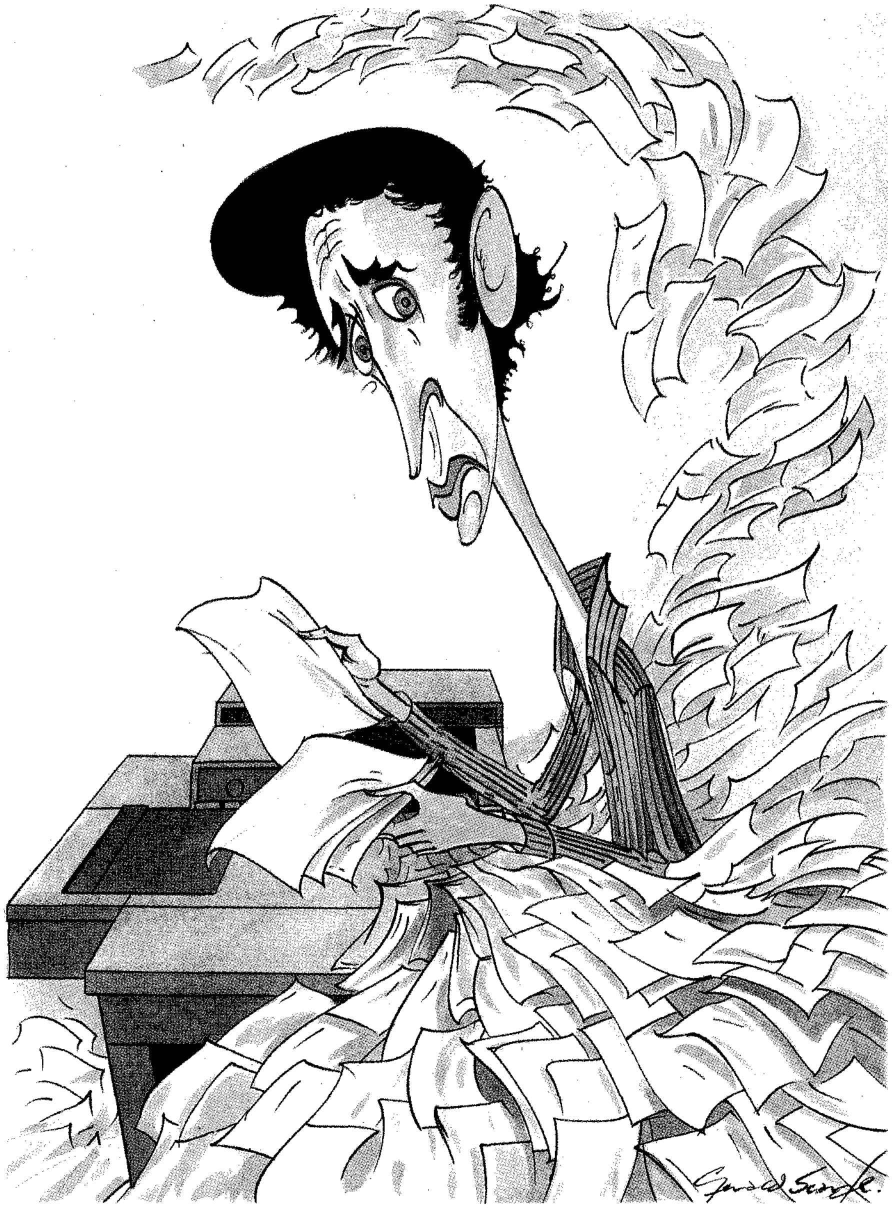
door on Ali Baba's treasure"), purloining them, and strategically giving them away in the hope of impeding the government's war planning. His greatest triumph in this line was several leaks in March, 1968, to Neil Sheehan, then a *Times* reporter, of documents suggesting that the American military leadership had regularly given President Johnson misleadingly optimistic reports about how the war was going. Within two weeks, Johnson announced that he would halt American bombing above the 20th Parallel, begin peace talks, and not run for reëlection; it looked as if Ellsberg had almost single-handedly engineered the beginning of the end of the war. But the war didn't end, and Ellsberg started down a path that led to the Pentagon Papers. It was quite a long path. Merely the logistics of the project, in those early days of photocopying, were more complicated than you'd think; many pages of "Secrets" are devoted, and never uninterestingly, to copy shops and suitcases and airplanes and cardboard boxes and scissors and glue. There were long, fruitless negotiations with several possible recipients of the Papers, mostly liberal senators, before negotiations began with the *Times*.

But the publication of the Pentagon Papers, which copiously documented how uncertain an enterprise the Vietnam War had always been, didn't bring the war to an end; indeed, Nixon escalated it. Even people over a certain age may have trouble recalling what the Pentagon Papers actually said. After the Justice Department decided to enjoin the *Times* from publishing them, the discussion of the Papers shifted from their content to the freedom-of-the-press dispute, which the Supreme Court decided in the press's favor. Once Ellsberg was identified as the leaker, he briefly went on the lam in Cambridge, then turned himself in, was put on trial, and was set free. He ends "Secrets" by making a detailed and persuasive case that the leak of the Pentagon Papers did help end the war, though in a way he hadn't anticipated: by setting in motion the Watergate scandal. Richard Nixon wasn't entirely displeased with the publication of the Papers, since the historical period they covered ended ten months before he took office, and thus made the war look like the fault of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. On the other hand, Nixon intuited correctly that Ellsberg might possess more inside information, this time about his own Administration. Before Nixon's Plumbers undertook the Watergate burglary, they broke into the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist in Beverly Hills, looking for material that could be used to blackmail or discredit him. (During the period when Ellsberg was in psychoanalysis, which is what the Plumbers were presumably seeking to document, he was living on the beach in Malibu, driving a white Triumph Spitfire convertible, and putting "most of my energy . . . obsessively into a bachelor private life.")


Gerald Scarfe.

The Pentagon Papers were the culmination of years of strategic leaking.

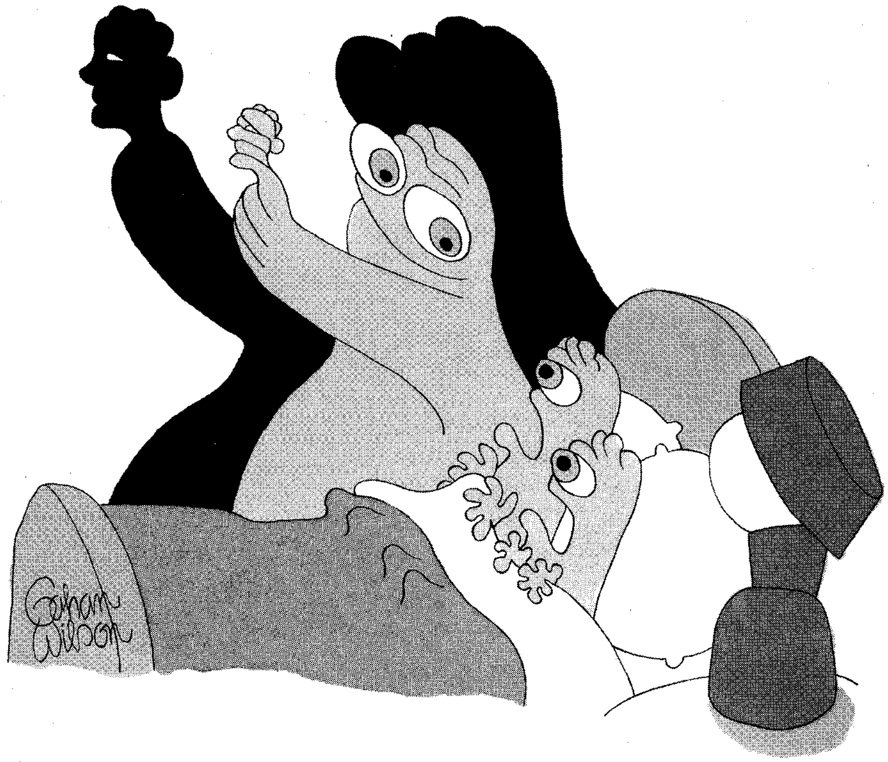
GERALD SCARFE

Ellsberg points out that there is much stronger evidence tying Nixon to the psychiatrist's-office break-in than to the Watergate burglary, and that the "smoking gun" tape that led to Nixon's resignation, in August, 1974, recorded Nixon approving a payment of hush money to the mastermind of the Ellsberg operation, E. Howard Hunt. Within less than a year, the American war in Vietnam was finally over. If you buy Ellsberg's theory, what really helped end the war was the maddening effect on Nixon of Ellsberg's existence: an establishment radical spreading stolen information—the enemy within.

Ellsberg has evidently spent a good part of the past three decades working on this book. "Secrets" is not the hasty memoir of somebody in the news who is aware of how fast his star is fading. It's long and meticulous; every scene is thoroughly researched and carefully paced, and fitted to its place in Ellsberg's over-all political progression. Ellsberg encapsulates each of the anti-war movement's main phases. The Pentagon section of "Secrets" is a wonderful evocation of the intoxicatingly frantic routine of the overachievers who populate the next-to-the-top level of government; it shows Ellsberg and his colleagues planning the war with utter confidence in its justness as a cause and with contemptuous disregard for Congress, public opinion, and the woefully gullible press. In the Vietnam section, Ellsberg segues into the "quagmire" position that dominated liberal thinking about the war in the mid-sixties, according to which the real (but perhaps remediable) problem was the corruption of the South Vietnamese government and MACV, the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. On his return to the United States, Ellsberg adopts the view that the problem is with the basic purpose of the war effort, not its efficacy. He becomes increasingly angry, and, as he does, the logic of his position becomes fuzzier. Sometimes he seems to be a pacifist who simply opposes all government-sponsored violence. At other times, he suggests that the specific aims and conduct of the United States were evil: after the publication of the Pentagon Papers, he tells *Newsweek* that they are "the U.S. equivalent of the Nuremberg war-crimes documents."

As Ellsberg's fervor grows, so does his willingness to violate the boundaries of ordinary behavior. Ellsberg doesn't only steal classified government documents and give them away; he also subordinates his personal dealings to the cause. Again and again, he presents little scenes in which people confess to him that, although they are every bit as anti-war as he is, they lack his willingness to risk everything for the movement. Ellsberg, meanwhile, puts the cause ahead of both his own welfare and that of his friends and family. The head of RAND, Harry Rowen, a close and loyal friend, loses his job because of him. Ellsberg, having missed a good deal of his son's childhood while away in Washington and Vietnam, decides to bond with the boy by bringing him in on the photocopying of the Pentagon Papers. Then he informs his ex-wife that he probably will have to stop supporting her and their children, because he's going to leak the Papers and go to jail.

The publication of "Secrets" is uncannily well timed. Ellsberg's first day of work in the Pentagon, in the summer of 1964, coincided with the Gulf of Tonkin incident, which became the basis for a congressional resolution that gave Lyndon Johnson almost unlimited authority to pursue the Vietnam War. Ellsberg establishes that the incident was not the military attack on an American ship that Congress thought it was, and that the Administration was cooking up evidence to justify a course of action it had already decided upon. Just a few weeks ago, Congress passed a resolution authorizing a war with Iraq, which gives the President the widest war-making latitude since the Gulf of Tonkin resolution.



But there are some obvious difficulties in looking for guidance about Iraq in Ellsberg's Vietnam narrative. Given the copious news leaks and op-ed skirmishes of the past six months, nobody could argue that if people only knew what kind of policy arguments were taking place inside the Administration we wouldn't be heading to war. Thanks in no small part to Daniel Ellsberg, the authority of official Washington no longer feels unitary and unquestionable. Is there any conceivable secret document one could leak that would defuse the coming war in the way that Ellsberg imagined the Pentagon Papers would defuse the war in Vietnam? (A C.I.A. assessment that Saddam Hussein poses no immediate military threat to the United States was made public just before the vote on the war resolution, and had no discernible effect.) Still, Vietnam and Iraq are a useful pairing if we're looking at why the United States goes to war when its immediate survival isn't at stake.

Why *did* Ellsberg believe that the publication of the Pentagon Papers would help end the war? People often put this question to Ellsberg when he was shopping the Pentagon Papers around the Senate office buildings. "Isn't it after all only history?" Senator Fulbright asked. For Ellsberg, though, it wasn't only history; it was a case study in the hazards of decision-making under conditions of uncertainty. And that is a subject Daniel Ellsberg has thought about a lot.

"Secrets" is actually the second book that Ellsberg has published recently. The first was "Risk, Ambiguity, and Decision" (Garland; $65), which came out last year and is a reissue of the dissertation he submitted to the Harvard economics department in 1962. Ellsberg devoted a good portion of his life to decision theory, and made quite a significant contribution for somebody so young. People are still publishing comments on his best-known idea, the so-called "Ellsberg paradox."

The paradox arises from a series of games involving colored balls in urns. Let's say there are two urns, each of which contains a hundred balls, which are either red or black. One urn contains fifty red balls and fifty black balls. The proportion of red and black in the other urn is unknown. You can draw one ball from one of the urns, without looking, and if you draw a red ball you win a hundred dollars. Which urn will you choose?

There is no good reason to think that the chance of getting a red ball is any better in one urn than in the other, but Ellsberg found that people overwhelmingly chose the urn known to have fifty balls of each color. The person running the game would then say, "O.K., you think that urn is likelier to have a red ball; now I'm going to offer you a hundred dollars if you draw a black ball." If you turned to the fifty-fifty urn for the red ball, it would seem you had a hunch that the other urn contained more black balls, and therefore you should try to draw your black ball from it. But, overwhelmingly, people chose the fifty-fifty urn again. The Ellsberg paradox is that people so strongly prefer definite information over ambiguity that they make choices consistent neither with the laws of probability nor with themselves.

The fact that Ellsberg spent years working on this kind of problem casts an interesting light on the progression of his views on the Vietnam War. When he toured the backcountry with John Paul Vann, he was struck by how different the war looked at first hand from how it looked back in Washington. American and South Vietnamese forces were supposed to be "pacifying" South Vietnam—that is, ridding rural areas of armed opposition to the government—and American officers consistently submitted reports saying that pacification was working. Ellsberg saw that it wasn't, that the reports were naïve at best and faked at worst. Having been trained to think that bad decisions were the product of inadequate information, he concluded that the Johnson Administration was pursuing the pacification policy because it was being lied to. Characterizing his own view at the time, Ellsberg says, "The solution seemed to be to find ways to get better information to the president."

For Ellsberg, the shattering revelation of the Pentagon Papers was that the American Presidents who made decisions about Vietnam had actually been well informed. Nobody was lying to them about the probability of success of American engagement, and they engaged anyway. All this contradicted not only Ellsberg's own explanation for mistaken judgments but a whole way of seeing the world, in which if decision-makers can be given good information they will make rational choices. But even after reading the Pentagon Papers, Ellsberg remained loyal to the tenets of decision theory; in leaking the Papers to the press, he was simply changing jurisdictions, trading in a faith that perfectly informed Presidents will make rational decisions for a faith that a perfectly informed public will force rational decisions on misguided Presidents. That's why Ellsberg comes to regard "deception," "secrecy," and "lies" as the devils responsible for bad policy—they were other names for misinformation. Hidden within the morally outraged and civilly disobedient radical, in other words, was the soul of a wronged decision theorist. The publication of the Pentagon Papers presented a new kind of Ellsberg paradox: providing the public with complete information didn't have the effect that Ellsberg expected.

As a young theorist, Ellsberg had noticed that it's hard to get people to change a course they've set based on bad information, even after you've given them better information. But in the case of Vietnam (and, by extension, Iraq) there is another explanation for the failure of accurate information to produce a single, rational outcome: the decision-makers are making value judgments about how important the goal is and how high a price they are willing to pay to achieve it. American Vietnam policy mystified and enraged Ellsberg because its goal, preventing Vietnam from becoming a Communist-governed country, was much less valuable to him than it was to Congress, the public, or the various Presidents during the years when the American commitment was being ratcheted up to the level of full-scale war.

Why did Johnson and Nixon stick with a war that was going so poorly? Partly, it was a matter of wanting to avoid humiliation once the United States committed its forces. Also, they had an alternative scenario in mind: a Vietnam that looked like Korea, with a tense but stable relationship between a Communist North and a pro-American South. South Vietnam might even have moved from puppet governance to democracy, as South Korea has. And Johnson, at least, rejected an even more hawkish policy—using military force more aggressively in the hope of forcing the North to surrender. Ellsberg says that such a policy inevitably would have led to the use of nuclear weapons and a war with China, but Johnson's policy, combined with the inexhaustible determination of the North Vietnamese, produced only protracted stalemate. Johnson was balancing public and congressional opinion, the goal of preventing South Vietnam from becoming Communist, his chances of success, and the likely cost in blood and treasure of the course he chose. If he had been willing to pay any price, he might have won; if he hadn't cared about the goal, he wouldn't have escalated the war. Instead, he wound up with a compromise policy that failed horribly, and a great deal of death and destruction occurred to no end. Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy made similar illogical-seeming decisions, as Ellsberg discovered when he read the Pentagon Papers, not because they were ill-informed but because they, too, regarded preventing Communist rule in South Vietnam as extremely important, though not important enough to demand all the military options at their disposal.

In the end, the Vietnam War can't be reduced to a problem of miscalculated probability. It is of the utmost importance right now that we understand that the decision to go to war is ideological, not informational: the reason people disagree vehemently about war in Iraq is not that the facts on the ground or the true prospects of American military success are being kept hidden. What they disagree about is under what conditions and by what means the United States should try to affect the governance of other countries. It's not what we know but what we believe in that makes all the difference. ♦

BOOKS

CHINESE BOXES

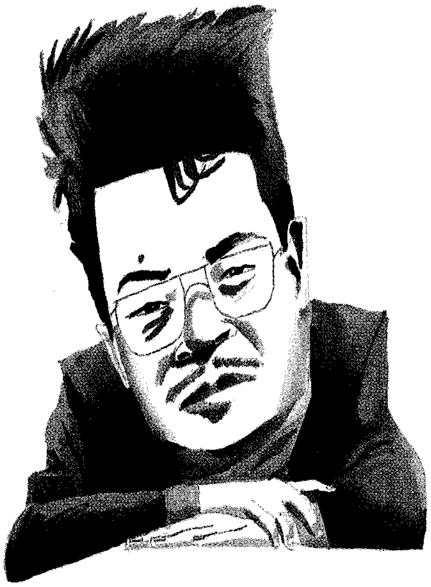
Madness and memory in the age of Tiananmen.

BY NELL FREUDENBERGER

There's an early Ha Jin story about a soldier who falls in love with a wireless operator solely on the basis of her telegraphic style. He's afraid she'll never be interested in a man like him: "His wrists were thick, and his square thumbs always embarrassed him. But everybody was impressed by the beautiful long lashes above his froggy eyes." Ha Jin's empathy for his characters is matched by his unwillingness to give them a break. Reading him is almost like falling in love: you experience anxiety, profound self-consciousness, and an uncomfortable sensitivity to the world—and somehow it's a pleasure.

Ha Jin's third novel, "The Crazed" (Pantheon; $24), like much of his earlier work, is a complicated web of human attachments; he traps his characters in impossible situations, and leaves them there to squirm. The narrator, Jian Wan, is a student of literature in a provincial university whose mentor, Professor Yang, suffers a stroke in the spring of 1989. Because Jian is engaged to the professor's daughter—a student in Beijing who writes to him about the gathering democracy protests there—he is asked to keep his teacher company in the afternoons. As Jian sits in the hospital room, Professor Yang slowly goes mad—conducting imaginary conversations, spilling his own secrets, and giving his student an education he's not sure he wants.

Like the Nobel Laureate Gao Xingjian, Ha Jin left China in the mid-eighties, and both writers' fiction has explored the place of intellectuals in a tightly controlled society. In contrast to Gao Xingjian, whose work is in Chinese and whose style places him in the tricky category of "experimental" writers, Ha Jin writes in English, with a deadpan hyperrealism. As Professor Yang bitterly laments his marriage and his chosen vocation—the entire substance of his life—Jian thinks absently, "Perhaps he should be treated by a psychiatrist; acupuncture or acupressure might help him too." Ha Jin's narrators often have a dense, logy air, as if they'd just woken up into the world and are blinking in its strong light. The quality stems from the author's brand of blunt observation: "I patted his back for a while to relieve his gasping. Then I began laying him down slowly. The muscles on his face twitched and twitched as though something were biting him in his mouth. I too was sick at heart." The progression of physical details saves the final sentiment from cliché; like the best realist writers, Ha Jin sneaks emotional power into the plainest declarative sentences.



Ha Jin

MARK ULRIKSEN

Ha Jin's talent for ambivalence—for beautiful lashes fringing froggy eyes—may explain why he's so good at chronicling infidelity. Despite Jian's devotion to his fiancée, he has a crush on an older graduate student, named Weiya Su. Unhappily, he soon figures out that Professor Yang—who has been murmuring half-lucid endearments to a young woman with nipples "like coffee candy"—has been having an affair with the same girl. Jian is forced to watch as Weiya visits her lover in the hospital, bringing him an expensive, out-of-season watermelon: "She had fed him! She didn't even bother to conceal their relationship. I was touched and upset at the same time. A feeling of isolation overcame me, as though she had been the only person I could turn to for a bit of solace, but she too had gone beyond my reach." That sense—of having lost something before actually experiencing it—recurs in Ha Jin's work. His previous novel, "Waiting," for which he won the National Book Award in 1999, describes a man who spends eighteen years trying to leave his wife; finally, he marries his lover, and nothing changes. In that novel, which alternates between a village and an urban hospital, Ha Jin explores an intimate subject with a surgeon's combination of detachment and depth. This precision is rarer in "The Crazed," where you sense an author rushing to delineate the various relationships contained in the sickroom. What is striking about both novels is Ha Jin's willingness to let his protagonist remain divided, to wish for several lives in which to pursue coexisting desires.

Like "Waiting," "The Crazed" tells a political story in sexual terms. Almost delirious, Professor Yang hopes that he and his much younger lover will be together in the next life, "when I won't be a bibliophile feeding on paper every day. I will be a man capable of honest work and worthy of a woman like you." Professor Yang has always been messianic on the subject of poetry; now, by condemning his vocation, he makes Jian wonder whether his own idealism was foolish. The professor, imagining himself doing "honest work," as a "cabbage or soybean grower," appears to have taken up the outdated ideology of the Cultural Revolution, and to have forgotten the humiliation and torture he suffered during that period. Ha Jin is apparently asking where people who came of age later are supposed to look for guidance after the political madness that ravaged the previous generation. The question resonates as long as Professor Yang remains at the center of the story; his personal betrayals of Jian are what make the historical injuries smart.

The last chapters of "The Crazed"

are a departure from the rest of the novel, a burst of frantic activity after the claustrophobia of the hospital room. Both Jian and the author seem drawn toward Tiananmen Square almost against their will. Jian immediately qualifies his decision to go, distinguishing himself from the other students: "Different from them I had no grand purpose or dream of democracy and freedom; nor did I have the sense of responding to our national exigencies. My motive was mainly personal—I was driven by desperation, anger, madness, and stupidity." Ha Jin is better at conveying Jian's state of mind than at describing the atmosphere in the streets around the square, where the dialogue seems like something out of a spaghetti Western. "Run for your lives, folks!" one protester screams as an officer threatens: "I'm killing all of you hooligans. Take this!" While Jian grows decisive, his author becomes less so. Particularly in the final chapters, Ha Jin seems to be working through his own ideas about the events of that spring (he had left China only a few years earlier), using Jian as a mouthpiece: "I aspired not only to show my bravery to Meimei but also, like a free man capable of choice, to dislodge myself from the revolutionary machine."

Ha Jin is capable of writing beautifully and subtly about political events. The Cultural Revolution surfaces in the allegorical conflict between the village wife and the modern, urban girlfriend of "Waiting," as well as in Professor Yang's sad and self-rending speeches. Ha Jin is clumsier when he allows more recent events to take over the plot of "The Crazed," partly because fictional characters seldom fall into step with predetermined narratives. Jian's miserable fascination as he listens to the professor talk about Weiya is one of the best things about the novel, but that sort of rich psychological dynamic is drowned out by the clamor of public history. You might expect Ha Jin's sensitivity to human complexity to lead him away from chronicles of street protests, except when the protests are about insuring the right to that complexity—the freedom to disagree, to hedge, or to avoid deciding altogether. The subject traps the author even as the character escapes, leaving the university for a more permanent kind of exile. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Silence on the Mountain, *by Daniel Wilkinson (Houghton Mifflin; $24).* In 1993, Wilkinson, a recent Harvard graduate travelling in Guatemala, befriended the heiress of a coffee plantation there. Her family had abandoned the land in 1983, after guerrillas burned down the main house. Wilkinson's frustrated attempts to discover what prompted the arson became an extensive investigation, and as the author interviewed a cross section of Guatemalans—from the former defense minister General Gramajo to eighty-year-old peasant farmers—his friend's plantation emerged as a microcosm of Guatemala's hidden and terrible history. The author's style is taut and precise, but it is the Guatemalans themselves who speak with the greatest eloquence. After a massacre in the village of Sacuchum, where forty-four peasants had their throats slit by the Army for allegedly aiding the guerrillas, a witness describes a peasant pleading for his life before a military official: "Please, *señor*, God does not permit this," he cried, to which the captain replied, "Here there is no God! Here there is only the Devil."

In Ruins, *by Christopher Woodward (Pantheon; $24).* In 1462, Pope Pius II praised classical ruins for their "exemplary frailty" and issued an edict to protect them; in the centuries that followed, generations of writers have delighted in their melancholy power. Woodward, a young British architectural historian, claims to have been obsessed with ruins since childhood; here he interweaves personal reflections (which hover just this side of preciousness) with historical descriptions of actual ruins—castles, follies, blitzed London, and, above all, Rome—and the writers and artists who have been captivated by them. For the true connoisseur, it seems, nothing ruins a ruin like repair. Rome, Woodward says, has failed to inspire anyone since the late nineteenth century, when archeologists cleared away the detritus of two millennia. The Colosseum was once dotted with shrines and sprouted rare plants whose seeds had been sown from the bodies of the exotic animals killed there. Now it is "as bald as the foundations of a modern construction site."

On Being Ill, *by Virginia Woolf (Paris; $20).* The first sentence of this essay, which was originally published in T. S. Eliot's *New Criterion*, in 1926, includes references to both the consolations of angels and the indignities of the dentist's chair, and this almost gleeful waywardness is characteristic of what's to come. By turns lyrical, self-mocking, and outlandish, Woolf's meditation on the perils and privileges of the sickbed lampoons the loneliness that makes one "glad of a kick from a housemaid" and extolls the merits of bad literature for the unwell. As Hermione Lee points out in her excellent introduction, the author only hints here at the mental and physical illnesses that plagued her throughout her life, but one's knowledge of them gives the references to "waters of annihilation" and "deserts of the soul" an added resonance. And yet the consolations of creation are also considered. When Woolf imagines beauty in a frozen-over garden, even after the death of the sun—"There, thrusting its head up undaunted in the starlight, the rose will flower, the crocus will burn"—it seems less a triumph of nature than of art.

The Answer Is Never: A Skateboarder's History of the World, *by Jocko Weyland (Grove; $13.50).* This chronicle, by a seasoned practitioner, of the halting but persistent ascent of skateboarding is sharp and winning, depicting from the inside the evolution of a subculture that has retained its stylistic distinctiveness even as it has spawned ESPN shows and tacky merchandising franchises. Unfortunately, Weyland spends too much time fretting that skaters have gone soft, and lamenting the decay of the anti-authoritarianism that once animated the sport. But his picture of the real world in which skaters live belies his warmed-over Frankfurt School critique, and he is at his best when he writes about what skating gave him as a kid—what it's like to awaken to a sense of possibility, and to realize that what you've grown up with is not what you're stuck with.

THE ART WORLD

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New directions for the oldest medium.

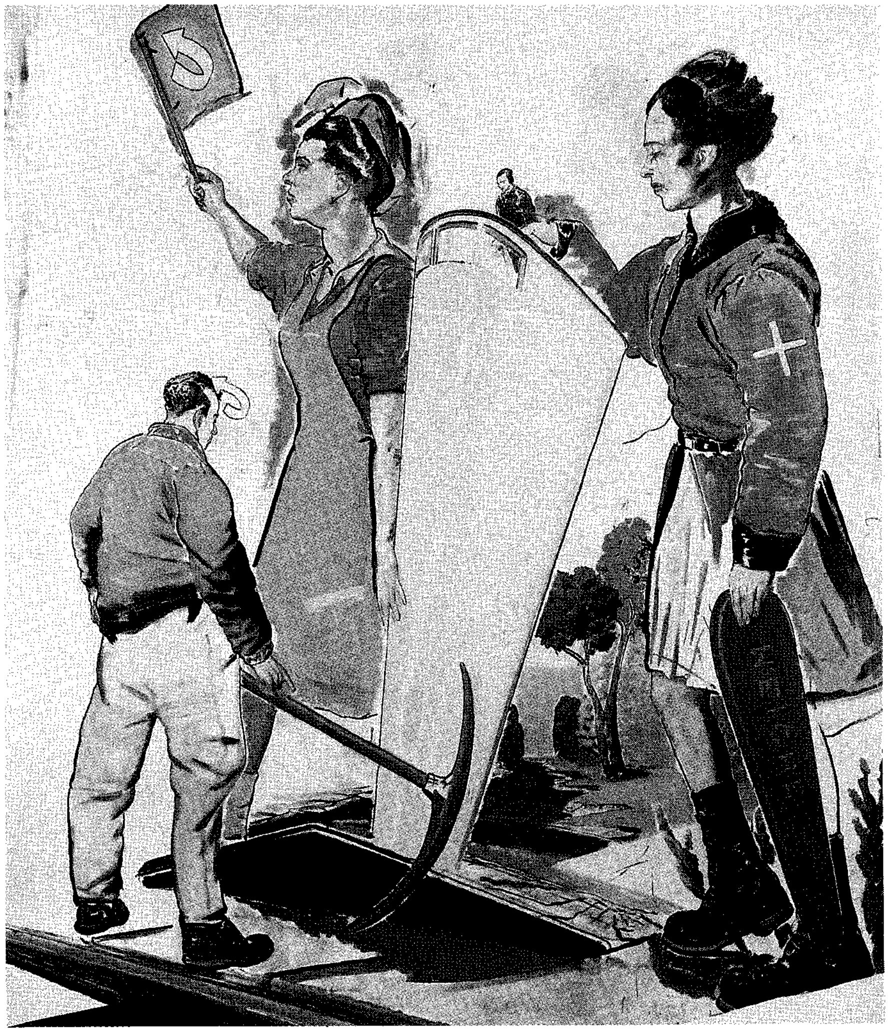
BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

The dryly titled "Drawing Now: Eight Propositions," a show at the Museum of Modern Art, in Queens, is a trailblazing event for an art world that has sorely needed one. Laura Hoptman, the curator of the exhibition, which runs until January 6th, has sorted out a quiet but potent development of the last decade by focussing on an international array of twenty-six young but established artists of many tendencies. Her selections vary in quality, but even some of the weaker elements testify that artists are beginning to reconceive their vocation around the humble disciplines of pencil, pen, or brush on paper. She tacitly rejects the flabby creed of academic avant-gardism, which defines "art" as anything that an art institution chooses to exhibit, thus rendering the term so nebulous that judging it, other than as entertainment or politics, is a fool's errand. Although "Drawing Now" may be eclectic to a fault and indulgent of wacky formats—pointlessly large ones, in some cases—it affirms that a search is on for renewed standards of mastery, validity, and eloquence in a medium that has been the bedrock of visual art since the draftsmen of Lascaux.

What does it mean to make drawings in an age of myriad image technologies? My two favorite artists in the show, John Currin and Elizabeth Peyton, answer that it's a personal enterprise, played out on a public stage for an audience that isn't limited to the living. Currin's fantasies of winsome, sexy sylphs and his satiric faux portraits of haplessly neurotic contemporary men and women provide startling encounters with art history. A virtuoso, Currin competitively evokes both Old Masters such as Cranach and Watteau and their debased legacies in popular illustration. It's easy to characterize his work as perverse and decadent, but what else, on the current scene, affords pleasures so savory and overflowing? Peyton likewise risks categorical contempt by making art for pleasure's sake, with ostensibly languid but breathtakingly assured drawings in colored pencil and runny watercolor of ultra-pretty, pouty friends. Honest adoration is her bulwark, which proves as tough as stone. Her memorials to youthful romantic longing are fresh and timeless.

Hoptman groups Currin and Peyton in one of her "propositions" (she calls it "Fashion and Likeness"), along with a Scotsman, Graham Little, who meticulously draws female fashion models wearing, or glumly enduring, Gucci, Prada, and other big-name duds. Lacking Currin's wit and Peyton's passion, the Scottish artist generates a brittle melancholy that points up the sharper authenticity of his New York mates. Something similar happens repeatedly, if not so dramatically, throughout the show, as a viewer's powers of discrimination are called into play. Nothing could be further from the festivalist pluralism of so many contemporary group exhibitions (Documenta, the Whitney Biennial) that pat the darling tousled heads of all artists equally.

The last heyday of drawing was during the early nineteen-seventies, when the post-minimalist buzzword was "process." The likes of Sol LeWitt and Bruce Nauman manifested thought in action with conceptual projects and what looked like glorified napkin sketches by engineers. They tipped drawing away from the sensuousness of painting, toward the rationality of design and architecture. Several of Hoptman's proposi-



Neo Rauch's "Weiche" (1999): Harsh, proletarian utopias depicted with a chafing wit.

tions, such as "Architectural Drafting" and "Visionary Architecture," signal the belated arrival of a countermovement in which professional-looking draftsmanship is infused with sheer aestheticism and the bizarre. The London artist Paul Noble bids to be the M. C. Escher of our day in obsessively detailed visions of nightmare cities, whose forms may double as block-lettered messages. Matthew Ritchie, a fabulist of science with an ardent following, depicts the creation and evolution of life in large, bravura diagrams executed on plastic in pencil and colored ink. They quickly exhaust my patience for cogitation. But Ritchie is on to something: the intimate kinship of drawing and thinking, spun out to epic extremes. A younger, more elastic brain than mine may be a requisite for enjoying him.

The show's most rewarding groups, after "Fashion and Likeness," are "Vernacular Illustration" and "Ornament." Here the artists embrace two of the most pejorative terms in modern criticism: illustration and decoration. Embellishment of heartfelt stories and cultivation of sophisticated beauty have been disparaged in serious art for so long that their revival jolts. Among the most compelling of the works in this vein are Kara Walker's narratives about slave ships and plantation life, Kai Althoff's darkling watercolors of lonely individuals and lonelier couples, and Laura Owens's quizzically tentative botanical designs, which seem oddly nonplussed by their own loveliness. In each case, talent and intelligence gain traction from a forthright, demanding task. A devotion to drawing overcomes the postmodern cringe at meaning and sincerity. Gordian knots of self-consciousness are cut.

Two standout artists—Neo Rauch, of Germany, and Switzerland's Ugo Rondinone—are unclassifiable. Rauch, who lives in Leipzig, is forty-two years old. His large oils on paper, which suggest a kind of socialist-realist science fiction, explore a harsh utopia of taciturn proletarian giants and the odd besuited centaur. They are firmly contoured and monumentally composed in a rugged hand, with an astringent palette of black, yellow, a startling red-orange, and off-kilter pastels. "Warner" (1999) depicts uniformed men gathering at a picnic table set with vases, under gawkily stylized trees. The men are equipped with bulky devices that might be vacuum cleaners, chemical sprayers, or flamethrowers (one appears to be on fire). I have no idea what the picture is about—Rauch is new to New York, and we are only starting to understand him—but it's riveting. Like Currin, Rauch anchors retrogressive subjects and styles in the present tense of a quirky temperament. Both artists exercise a chafing, rather unfriendly wit and suggest a double sense of the verb "to draw": to limn and to pull forth. They don't merely appropriate memories of history and other art but bring them to fractious life.

SAMMLUNG DEUTSCHE BANK/COURTESY MOMA

Rondinone is a one-man movement; call it "Ugoismo." This thirty-nine-year-old Swiss polymath—in addition to drawing, he works in video and sound installations, sculpture, abstract painting, and photography—has quietly become a doyen of cosmopolitan taste and style in New York, where he now lives. To appreciate Rondinone's appeal, imagine "Eurotrash" as a term of the highest praise. The show at MOMA features two huge, beautiful, wallpaperish forest landscapes in white ink on black, which suggest negative offprints of eighteenth-century rococo designs. Hoptman, in the catalogue, tells us that they were scaled up by hand from plein-air sketches that Rondinone regularly makes while hiking in Switzerland. This way of seeing—saturated with culture even amid raw nature—delivers a philosophical kick. It rebuts cynical theories of style as a social imposition and proposes that artifice may be as natural to human beings as leaves are to trees. Ugoismo equals innocence, excruciatingly refined.

Some parts of the show, notably a section entitled "Comics and Animation," which features images of sexy girls as fighter planes by the ubiquitous Takashi Murakami, fail in an instructive way. Comics and Japanese anime are thriving popular arts, which impose a secondhandedness on fine art that exploits them. (Why not just go to the real thing?) Artists who succeed today redeem orphaned modes of expression, undercutting the glossy impersonality and ennui of so much current culture, both high and low. Is the new drawing a refuge of the individual imagination—or the skirmish line of an impending counterattack? ♦

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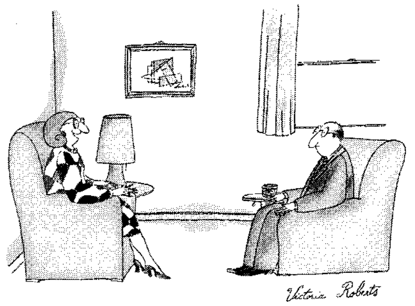

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IN FASHION

STRING THEORY

Ready-to-wear in Paris, a Versace retrospective in London.

BY JUDITH THURMAN

In my youth, I had a weakness for the esoteric. You could seduce me by reciting the poetry of any language I didn't speak. I was charmed by the gambler who introduced me to the *Daily Racing Form* and held rapt by the physicist who tried to explain string theory. His lesson didn't enlighten me about the hidden workings of a ten-dimensional "shadow universe" where enigmatic particles, some of them hypothetical, like Wino and Zino, have the names of space creatures from a children's book. But it did enhance my sense that there existed, as researchers in the field believe, a unifying "theory of everything." Fashion journalism tends to erode such a conviction.

An esoteric work that I still prize, especially for travel, is Roberto Calasso's "Literature and the Gods." The paperback is light, but the extreme density of the erudition makes it a kind of portable free weight that provides a strenuous mental workout before knocking one mercifully unconscious at the end of a mindless day. I packed it, along with too many shoes, for the Spring/Summer 2003 ready-to-wear shows in Paris early in October, and it proved strangely useful in my quest for clues to the meaning of the starry, gaseous, ever-expanding cosmos of the collections, and for the equally mysterious reasons I find myself employed in writing about them. I especially took heart from a surprising literary fact that Calasso mentions in passing. In the late eighteen-seventies, that most incorruptible of poets, Stéphane Mallarmé, single-handedly wrote, edited, and published "every word of a frivolous magazine called *La Dernière Mode*," a journal that later in his august career "could still, he claimed, when pulled out and dusted off, make him 'dream for hours.' " This "society and family gazette," I discovered from Gordon Millan's biography of Mallarmé, "provided an illustration of one of the latest dresses, a fashion article signed 'Marguerite de Ponty' " (who was Mallarmé), news "from the salons and the beaches" reported by Ix (also Mallarmé), and a section called "Le Carnet d'Or"—the Golden Notebook—devoted to "cooking and other practical hints." Unfortunately, neither Calasso nor Millan supplies an example of the cryptic poet's improbable output as a critic of womenswear and as the Symbolists' Martha Stewart, or describes the reveries that the diversion inspired. But, with a little effort, one can imagine that Mallarmé discerned an affinity between his own mode of writing—in which the haunting, repetitive phrase supplanted the concrete elucidation—and "the latest fashion." His life's work demonstrates that it is possible to fabricate an experience of revelation from which the material presence of truth has evaporated like a volatile spirit, leaving an essence only the senses can grasp. And that's just what great clothes do.

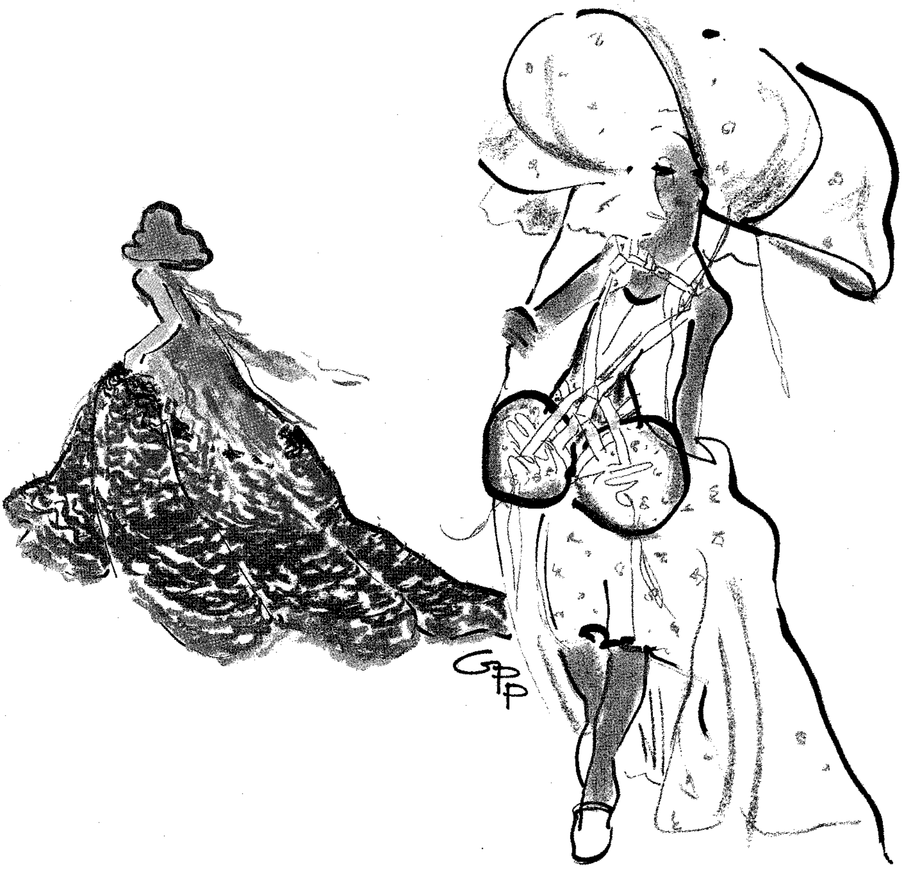
Had one plotted the trajectory of the shows on a street map of Paris, with straight pins and string, like a nineteenth-century military campaign, one would unwittingly have tatted the kind of hideous yet touching macramé doily a first-grader brings home for Mother's Day. There were a hundred and fifty défilés and presentations shoehorned into ten days, at hourly intervals from about nine in the morning until ten at night. Rarely were two sequentially in the same venue. One staggered around a city in the grip of labor disputes and gridlock, briefly alighting at the Trocadéro, the Musée Bourdelle, the École des Beaux-Arts, the Carrousel du Louvre, the Centre Pompidou, the Stock Exchange, a tent in the Place de Varsovie, a sports stadium, the Carreau du Temple, a night club in Pigalle (the gritty old Élysée Montmartre), a theatre in the Marais, and various boutiques, lofts, suites, cinemas, consulates, and firetraps in arty, double-digit arrondissements.

At some locales, there was free coffee or champagne and, occasionally, a tray of sweets, but one had no time for meals. That was probably just as well. Neoprene, the fabric of wetsuits, which has an unfortunate tendency to mimic sausage casing on the wrong body, was ubiquitous. At Balenciaga, Ghesquière used it in Hawaiian prints and abstractly seamed collages of color for glamorous surfer dresses cut to the thigh. Marc Jacobs at Vuitton and Giambattista Valli at Ungaro both revived the polka-dot bikini. Flirty tennis skirts at Chanel (worn with stilettos) were microscopic. Hussein Chalayan showed urban rompers with organic cutouts that were all peek and no boo. The entire season's worth of vintage-looking chiffon slip dresses at Stella McCartney might have been packed, so gossamer did they seem, into one of those oversized Kelly bags that make the perfect assignation kit, as the French acknowledge with their charming name for such an accessory: *baise-en-ville.*

With markets crashing and buyers anxious about matters even more serious than their clothing allowances, designers seemed to be making a collective show of gallantry, as if to say, Beauty first into the lifeboats. It wasn't quite as stirring as the singing of the "Marseillaise" in "Casablanca," but hard times and bad news inspired some of the best work in years: flattering, inventive drapery; heat and vibrance to fight depression; and a flourish of creativity with fabric. Helmut Lang set an example by making a lighthearted collection of heavy-handed materials. A cocktail dress with a nineteen-twenties silhouette was composed entirely of silver zippers sewn in vertical strips, so that the flat, black cotton edge provided the garment's body and the metal teeth its embellishment. For the daring, there was a schoolgirl's kilt, twelve inches long, of pleated sheet rubber. Thin black streamers of the same latex fluttered, like satin ribbons, from closely cut dark jackets with sleeves of *ombré* chiffon. (They might be useful for gauging which way the wind blows.) Alber Elbaz's lovely tabard dresses for Lanvin seemed strapless, but the front and back were seamed with invisible netting. Naoki Takizawa's collection for Issey Miyake was ethereal, too. He showed it among the Romanesque bas-reliefs in a reconstructed abbey at the Palais de Chaillot (where the worn stone foreheads of the saints bore an eerie similarity to those petrified by Botox in the front row). His work, according to the program, was inspired by stardust, calligraphy, waterfalls, birds in flight, and classical drapery, and it consisted of robes for a naiad sugared with translucent sequins, a bridal gown of trembling black chiffon petals, and softly pleated tunics with the purity of chitons, but done in vibrant overlays of sheer color, their volume defined by tendrils of smocking.

There is nothing new in fashion about fantasies of escape to the past, the future, or fairyland, but since September 11th last year a number of designers have expressed a formal interest in survivalism. At Comme des Garçons, Rei Kawakubo spun the uncut selvage of her garments into thickly plaited ropes and bulbous cables suitable for lowering oneself from the window of a prison or an ivory tower, then festooned them like leis over outsized khaki flak jackets trimmed with roses. The palette of bitter olive and shocking pink that she showed in a cramped, harshly lit studio had a Brechtian flavor. So did the scarified collection that Jun Takahashi at Under Cover helpfully entitled "Scab." This courteous young Japanese designer was making his début in Paris. Supple cutting gave long, Edwardian skirts of denim or duck a voluptuous grace. There was charm but no novelty to his layering of a miniskirt slashed to shreds over a pair of clamdiggers—it followed the current trend in Williamsburg and Tribeca for wearing ladylike dresses or vintage lingerie over jeans. The gesture that thrilled his audience was taking a boxcutter to the garments before repairing their wounds with lovingly hand-stitched patches and a fretwork of red sutures. He left all the threads dangling.

Paris has become, like New York, a city of immigrants living in their own villages within the greater metropolis. But the world of fashion more closely resembles ancient Rome at the time of its fall, when barbarians within the gates outnumbered citizens. The vast majority of the so-called French shows featured the work of foreigners, many of them obscure, at least to the consumer: Risto Bimbiloski, Venera Arapu, Dice Kayek, Fatima Lopes, Miwha Hong, Christian Wijnants, Lie Sang Bong, Maria Grachvogel, and Karim Tassi, to mention a few. With the exception of the big cheeses who stand alone—Gaulthier, Lacroix—and of Balenciaga, where Ghesquière has levelled out (at a high altitude) after a vertical takeoff, most of the venerable houses are under non-French direction. Galliano is at Dior, Tom Ford at YSL Rive Gauche, Julien Macdonald at Givenchy, Martin Margiela at Hermès, Marc Jacobs at Vuitton, Alber Elbaz at Lanvin, Michael Kors at Céline, Lizzy Disney at Jacques Fath, Phoebe Philo at Chloé—and, of course, Lagerfeld at Chanel. The French Republic of Bohemia has become a Belgian colony (though Gigli still trolls the Casbah dreamily, like an expatriate milord). Aristocratic decadence and Romantic iconoclasm are the fiefdoms of two working-class Englishmen—Galliano and McQueen—while the avant-garde consists mostly of Japanese irregulars.



Paris was full of the work of foreigners, like Alexander McQueen and Junya Watanabe.

GLADYS PERINT PALMER

In a hall at the Musée Bourdelle filled with grandiose heroic sculptures that prefigure the nineteen-thirties, Junya Watanabe presented a show that seemed to mock the fascist aesthetic of that period, and to insist on the nobility of trying, at least, to achieve serenity in a violent world. His collection paid homage to the pastoral painters of the eighteenth century—Fragonard and Watteau—whose great subject was the stolen private moment. To an operatic soundtrack, Watanabe presented a series of buoyant pastel shepherdess frocks in sprigged cotton toile and reëmbroidered eyelet, but their blitheness had restraints attached—the straps, buckles, and ruched whipcording of a parachute or a straitjacket. (Perhaps the contemporary equivalent of the eighteenth-century lady's maid, always on call to grapple with one's laces, is a psychiatric nurse.) In lieu of panniers and bustles, the dresses were constructed with exaggerated, built-in saddlebags and fanny packs, and sleeves wired like kites. The models floated through the hall straining at reality's moorings.

Darwinian theory teaches us that

we must adapt or perish. So do Martin Margiela and Yohji Yamamoto. They have both adapted to a harsh climate for purists, Yamamoto by signing a lucrative contract to design sportswear (his new Y-3 line) for Adidas, and Margiela by producing a collection for Hermès so fastidiously bourgeois that it almost seems tongue-in-cheek. But the ingenious collections that both designers showed under their own labels might have been inspired by Lavoisier's famous aphorism: "Nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed." These playful mutants reminded me of the robots my son collected as a little boy—humanoid figures with articulated plastic limbs that morphed into spacecraft. The proportions, even the identity, of the garments were as unstable as the world is. The inverted hem of a Margiela dress became a stole. A top slipped off the shoulders to zipper, like a peplum, over the hips. Sweaters with the trick backs of a magician's coffin hung from the neck like deluxe lobster bibs. He fashioned a fetching bustier entirely out of white athletic shoelaces, stitched horizontally, with the ends left dangling to tie across the bosom. In Yamamoto's cheaper line (Y's), floppy sleeves turned into obis, and a voluminous greatcoat of sludge-colored poplin could, with a snap, be trimmed or let out like a mainsail.

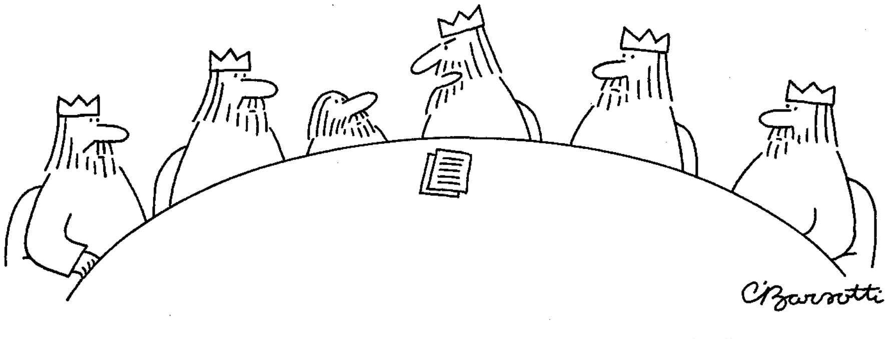
Anyone who is leery of sailing off into potentially troubled waters can, this spring, take an exotic virtual vacation in her own walk-in closet, although it may not be cheaper than chartering a yacht. Viktor & Rolf's giddy collection of carnival wear was generally rated the best entertainment of the week. Their show featured the infectious tunes of a Rio samba school and dancing models in clown makeup and wigs, and it was such a funfest that editors were wriggling in the aisles and gushing over the exuberantly ruffled dresses and the big ball skirts of globular silk roses stacked like pyramids of profiteroles, even though the racks at the showroom of the Dutch duo, who are much beloved by museum curators, displayed prim little pleated or tucked shifts in black silk, slightly frayed; a white satin blouse with a Pierrot ruff; and a cocktail dress of sooty nylon lace on a flesh-colored ground—tweaked versions of the Chanel classics familiar from some of Mademoiselle's most famous portraits.

Galliano, never a showman to be upstaged, condensed the festivities of a week-long tribal wedding in an obscure province somewhere between Outer Mongolia and Kerala into a fifteen-minute display of sartorial fireworks that showered the audience with colored powder while unfurling a gorgeous panoply of gauzy saris, chiffon and tulle skirts spangled with sequins, leggings of stretch paisley lamé, and lurid prints of grimacing Hindu divinities. His models wore face paint and tinsel, and they were laden, like the bride at such a celebration, with the contents of her extended family's linen closet. Some of the poor creatures even seemed to be wearing the family yurt. It was, as intended, too much to take in, so I dropped by the showroom on the top floor of the Institut du Monde Arabe, a glass-walled aerie with a panoramic terrace just east of Notre-Dame, where the transparency of the space and the grandeur of the view made a nice foil for the riot of the clothes. But lo, what pieces were being modelled for buyers? A knee-length skirt of taupe silk cut on the bias (Galliano's speciality); a chunky white cable-knit sweater; and a pair of cargo pants.

Perhaps we all secretly yearn for fate to blow our lives off their prosaic courses to some spectacularly alien Shangri-la where our senses will be employed as nature intended them to be: gathering intelligence in the service of our unfettered predatory appetites. That, at least, was the reverie of Alexander McQueen. His production opened with a giant-screen video projection of a girl (Ophelia? Miranda? Viola? the mute heroine of "The Piano"?) who appeared to be drowning. Her translucent rags and loose hair swirled around her limp body like the tentacles of a medusa. Then the models entered with their mascara streaming. Ensembles like a camisole encrusted with mother-of-pearl buttons worn with a lacy skirt of brine-colored suede might have washed up at the jungle's edge from a sunken galleon. In one sequence, the royal maidens thus swept away seemed to have borrowed the raiment of their lost twin brothers: braid-trimmed corsair jackets and rakish britches draped like dhotis, or a gentleman pirate's ruffed chemise. For the finale, they were brides of nature. Their billowing chiffon gowns had shredded skirts of a parrot-feather print or flounces like an accretion of fan coral. I suspect that one could maroon McQueen on an atoll and he would manage to turn the palm fronds and the scales of dead fish into something fabulous for his new boutique on West Fourteenth Street. Yet these were clothes one could wear—or at least that one might feel emboldened to dream of wearing—by a designer who believes that a stylish life is only worth living dangerously.

For the first time in memory, I left Paris with the same number of shoes I had brought with me. I was headed for London, which I knew would be chilly, but, inspired by Galliano, I decided I could get away with wearing everything in my suitcase at the same time: a short silk dress with a knotted hem over a long frayed slip over knitted trousers, and, on top of it all, a mohair poncho. Normally, this would have looked blimpish. Thanks to my fashion-week minibar diet of cocktail nuts three times a day, I was nearly a waif.

Three days earlier, the popular mayor of Paris, Bertrand Delanoë, the first socialist to govern the capital since the Paris Commune, had been stabbed in



"I don't need to check again. You're not on the list."

the stomach by a mentally disturbed homophobe (the Mayor is gay), who attacked him during a nocturnal art festival billed as Nuit Blanche—the sleepless night. Nearly half a million Parisians crowded the Métro (which, unfortunately, shut down at the usual hour) and roamed the streets in a festive mood (hungrily, too, as restaurants also shut down at the usual hour). When his assailant struck, toward three in the morning, the Mayor was mingling with the public at an event in the Hôtel de Ville (City Hall). "Let the party go on," he commanded bravely.

That might have been the motto of Gianni Versace, the subject of a retrospective that just opened at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. It is now five years since Versace was murdered, at the age of fifty, on the front steps of his villa in Miami's South Beach, by a serial killer who targeted gay men. Versace lived and died as he worked—sensationally, and surrounded by a crowd of revellers, indeed of orgiasts. Yet Mallarmé's languid friends the Decadents wouldn't have considered Versace one of their own, in part because he bristled with so much energy and libido. He was decadent like an imperial Roman, a big-game shooting spree, a grande bouffe—or like Las Vegas. "I don't like good taste," he liked to say, pugnaciously. But it is too facile merely to accuse Versace of bad taste. The V. & A. show suggests that he was a vulgarian by temperament; by virtue of appetite and perversity; and because it paid royally and was huge fun—not because he lacked the aesthetic subtlety or sense of history necessary for refinement.

The retrospective contains a hundred and thirty ensembles, including gowns worn by all those bold-faced friends of the house: the bad-girl blondes, the models he made super, the tragic princess—surely you know them. There is a mildly witty dress designed in collaboration with Roy Lichtenstein for the first Florence Biennale; examples of Versace's didactically outré but still masterly leatherwork, of his menswear for a special clientele, and of his sometimes regal couture (a queen by definition is a dominatrix). In the wake of the Guggenheim's much criticized pocketing of a multi-million-dollar donation from Giorgio Armani around the time of his retrospective in New York, two years ago, the V. & A. has made it clear that this show was funded exclusively from its own coffers. There is, however, a gift shop stocked with Versace trinkets and scarves; Christmas is coming, and throngs are expected.

One has to wonder about the point of being scrupulously unbeholden when the result is a spectacle more lavish in its servility than almost any that Versace—a master of self-promotion who often managed to arrange for photographs from his ad campaigns to be used on the covers of fashion magazines—ever staged on his own behalf. In her catalogue notes, the show's curator, Claire Wilcox, describes a series of supremely cheeky biker jackets and bustiers heavily encrusted with sequinned images of the Virgin Mary, and some flagrant metal-mesh and leather minidresses adorned with jewelled Byzantine crosses, as "a joyful celebration of ecclesiastic art . . . without sacrilegious intent." Versace, she adds, "was interested in the impact of the cross when used as a purely decorative motif in a secular context." But as the designer himself knew perfectly well—as every Italian has known since the advent of Christendom—the impact of the cross or the Madonna when used as a purely decorative motif in a secular context (in the case of these clothes, a sexual context) has no interest whatsoever except as a profanation. Nearly everything Versace did was joyously sacrilegious in intent, and he would probably be greatly aggrieved to have his credentials as a rogue thus impugned.

Versace was a brilliant tailor, colorist, and innovator with fabric. His metal-mesh dresses, for example, were made of Oroton, a brass-and-aluminum alloy that he developed with a German manufacturer and used as a signature in most of his collections. Its "intrinsic qualities," Chiara Buss writes in a catalogue essay, are "symbols of the invincible woman." They are also rather pointedly the attributes of a reptile: slinkiness, hardness, and "impenetrability." Oroton molds itself almost magnetically to the body, and, despite the fact that it is cold against the skin, excessively heavy, and easily snagged, Versace loved its erotic flash. Wilcox suggests that it turns the woman who wears it into "a Joan of Arc."

Nowhere are Versace's talents more appreciable than in the section of the exhibition devoted to his costumes for the opera and ballet, many done in collaboration with Maurice Béjart. (They are bizarrely lit, however, with flashing lights that illuminate each mannequin for a second, like the stripper in a peep show, before plunging it back into the dark.) What distinguishes these deliriously beautiful garments, so far as one can see them, from Versace's commercial fashion design, including the couture, and from the "showstoppers" he designed for celebrities, isn't their technical complexity (a Versace hallmark) but the range of emotion that they express: innocence, majesty, wantonness, yearning, humor, caprice, mourning—mobility of body and spirit. Challenged by a character or a work of art with real depth to which he could respond, Versace did—and with all the virtuosity at his command. Given a movie star to dress or a bank of cameras to feed, he produced something "iconic"—a word that now simply means hyper-photogenic. He possessed an unusually rich and even deeply cultivated design vocabulary, but he used it to make the same point over and over. What is missing from the exhibition is what was missing from the man. A true artist is a well. Versace was a mirror, and he needed something to reflect that wasn't himself.

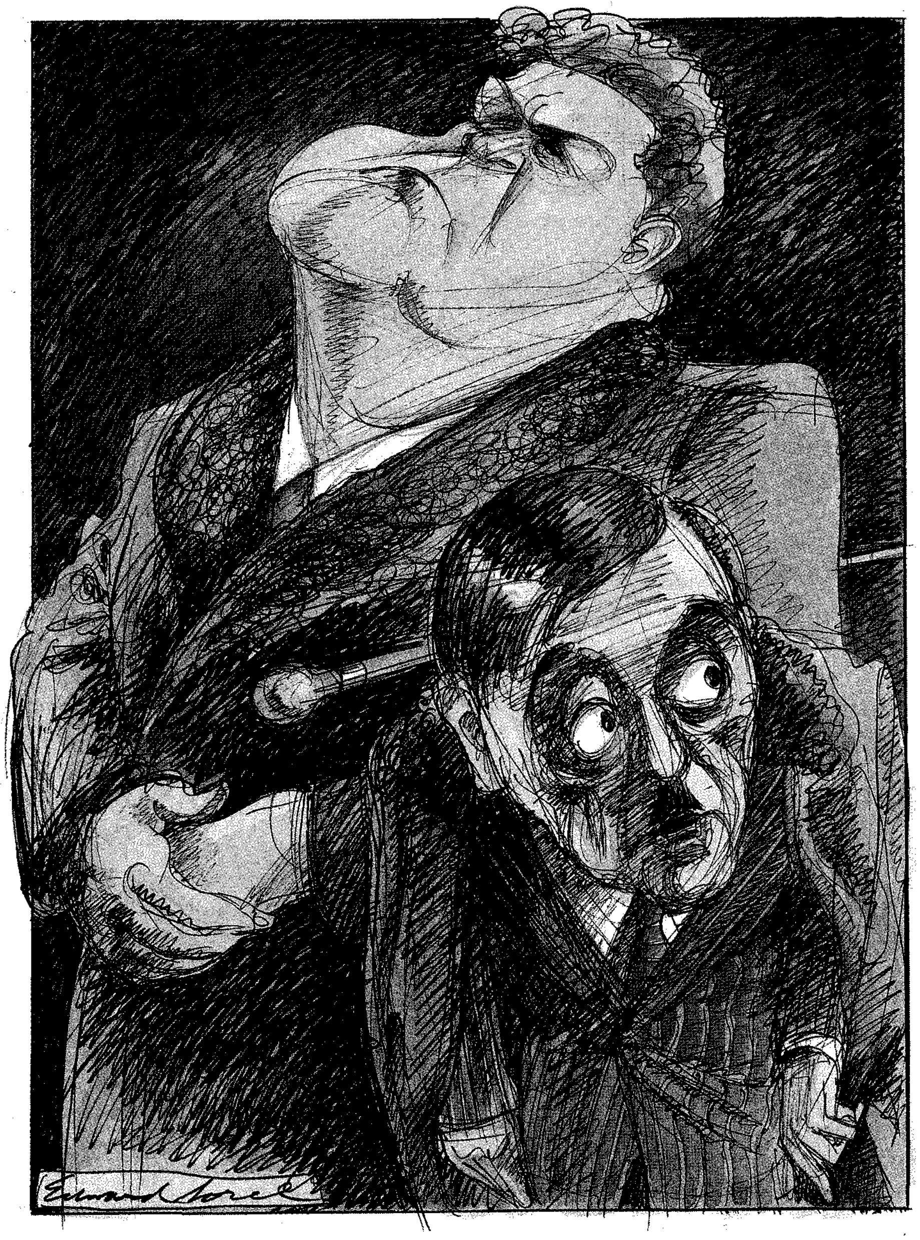
The French word for vocation—*métier*—also means "loom," and Mallarmé referred to himself as a "sacred spider" spinning threads from his mind and weaving them into "marvelous laces." He wrote about the "fretting of the veil"—the veil of convention—that took place in the temple of art at the end of the nineteenth century. Calasso relates these images to a god in the Upanishads who spun his cloak of selfhood from the "primordial matter." But every time a spider reconstructs her broken web it is a little more imperfect, and thus less divine, a little more frayed, asymmetrical, stylized—and that warped look of desperation is what makes it creepy—but also defiantly individual and morbidly fascinating. The fretted veil is a paradigm for the way innocence becomes entangled in self-consciousness, classicism lapses into the baroque, weary cultures resist their inevitable degeneration—and for modern fashion. ♦

THE THEATRE

DESPOTS AND FLESHPOTS

Al Pacino in Brecht, and a "Flower Drum Song" makeover.

BY JOHN LAHR



The stellar cast of "Arturo Ui" includes John Goodman and Al Pacino.

In the epilogue to "The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui," Bertolt Brecht's 1941 Chicago-gangster parable about Hitler's ascent to power (revived by the National Actors Theatre at the Michael Schimmel Center for the Arts, at Pace University), the title character comes downstage, strips off his mustache, and speaks directly to the audience. "Don't yet rejoice in his defeat, you men!" he cautions. "The bitch that bore him is in heat again." The forces that gave rise to the tyranny of the thirties—economic panic, a hysterical and fearful populace, a call for preëmptive strikes against enemies, a bullying pressure to conform to the will of authority, abuses of the rule of law—are the mortar with which Brecht builds his historical farce. For Brecht, the playwright's job is not just to think against the system but to lead the audience to an awareness of political reality, to make it demand change, instead of escape. "If we could learn to look instead of gawking," he writes in the play. "If only we could act instead of talking / We wouldn't always end up on our arse." Onstage, Brecht's skepticism is embodied by an aesthetic of detachment, where idea and action are placed in a continual ironic counterpoint that is at once instructive and entertaining, both inside and outside the moment.

To launch the 2002-03 season, the National Actors Theatre has imported the distinguished avant-garde British director Simon McBurney, who has souped up the Brechtian staging, added evocative grainy black-and-white period projections by Ruppert Bohle, and given the show some crisp and startling touches that make the whiff of Weimar even more piquant. We are introduced to the thugs as silhouettes in a police perp walk; Dullfeet—a character based on the Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss, whose assassination by the Nazis led to the invasion of Austria—is played hilariously (by Paul Giamatti) as a midget who scuttles on kneecaps rigged with shoes; during the trial scene, which is a mockery of justice, the words of the United States Constitution are projected around and across the proscenium. But although McBurney has stylized the production, he hasn't stylized the performances; they are neither light enough nor exaggerated enough to catch what Brecht calls the "horror in the heart of farce." The stellar cast—including Al Pacino, Billy Crudup, John Goodman, Charles Durning, Steve Buscemi, and Chazz Palminteri—has not developed an acting style that can embrace the extraordinary.

Although Durning (as the oafish Old Dogsborough), Goodman (the loutish Giri), and Buscemi (the lame Givola) bring vivid personalities to their underwritten parts, the burden of the three-hour evening rests on the round shoulders of the production's star, Al Pacino, who plays Ui, the Chicago mobster turned mayor. I am a Pa-

EDWARD SOREL

cino diehard. I have followed him from the 1968 Off Broadway "The Indian Wants the Bronx," where his mesmerizing immediacy made his name, through any number of thrilling and volcanic performances, including those in Heathcote Williams's "The Local Stigmatic" and David Mamet's "American Buffalo." I'm impressed by his theatrical cunning and by his attempts to stretch his craft beyond the parameters of movie stardom and to maintain an ongoing inquiry into acting. But, of the many unusual paths Pacino has explored, surely this Brechtian adventure is the oddest. He is a naturalistic actor; his tics, his roving glances, his sloping walk externalize the roiling fury behind his sullen coal-black eyes. However, "Ui," as written and as exemplified by Brecht's Berliner Ensemble in performances first by Ekkehard Schall and later by Martin Wuttke, is essentially a clown play—Chaplin was Brecht's model of the epic actor. There's nothing even remotely clownish in Pacino's interpretation. In fact, his rumpled, baggy Ui resembles a sort of sleepwalker; he skulks around the stage with a gait that broadcasts his refusal to run wild. Through the first act, Pacino's face is frozen in a sort of Mortimer Snerd rictus; in Act II, as Ui rises to power, he wears Chaplin's striped pants and his brush mustache but, sadly, misses every opportunity to turn the props or even the pulchritudinous Mrs. Dullfeet upside down. In one of the play's best and most celebrated scenes, Ui is instructed by a histrionic Shakespearean actor (Tony Randall) on how to present himself in public. Ui is transformed from goober to *Übermensch*, his loose steps turned into goose steps. But even here the comedy is weirdly earthbound; entire areas of comment go unexplored. Pacino, like the production itself, can't seem to get beyond moral outrage to giddy inspiration. Instead, he falls back on his hoarse, hectoring voice. Shouting replaces satire. As a result, the dogmatic, not the dialectic, has its day.

While this production of "Ui" fails to play its author's game, the new version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1958 musical "Flower Drum Song" (at the Virginia) changes the game entirely. The reason for the metamorphosis becomes apparent when you read the original libretto, by Oscar Hammerstein II and Joseph Fields, in which the characterization is a racial cartoon on the Jerry Lewis level of cultural sensitivity. "Then send me two pounds of sea horse, a pound of dried snake meat and a box of longevity noodles," an Asian matron tells her supermarket in the original musical's first speech. When you take racial caricature and add a smidgen of pidgin, what you get is a musical that Kenneth Tynan famously called "a world of woozy song." But here the playwright David Henry Hwang puts a new chassis on an old engine. He eliminates stereotype, updates the evergreen American-immigrant dilemma over traditional and contemporary values, and repositions some of the songs as segues to more sophisticated, multicultural themes. The result is a vehicle that runs far better than its prototype.

Hwang's story gives the musical's heroine, Mei-Li (Lea Salonga), a more compelling historical trajectory. We follow her from Communist China to a failing Chinese Opera troupe in San Francisco, to love at first sight with the opera scion's disgruntled son, Ta (Jose Llana), to life at Ta's raffish, successful Club Chop Suey. The musical's makers have given a great deal of attention to the authenticity of Mei-Li's story but not, it seems, to the authenticity of her sound. In the prologue, as the chorus dances out her escape from China, Salonga sings Rodgers and Hammerstein's anthem of hope "A Hundred Million Miracles" in perfect English, as if she'd come straight from Vassar, not Peking. Though it sells the song, the oversight undermines the character's credibility and inhibits our suspension of disbelief.

"Flower Drum Song" 's intelligence may be rooted in Asian-American cultural contradictions, but its heart belongs to Broadway. Certainly the snazzy direction and choreography of Robert Longbottom do. Longbottom doesn't just verge on camp; with the help of Gregg Barnes's sensational costumes, he wallows in it. "Chop Suey," a song that satirizes the Asian impulse to pander to Western tastes, offers the memorably craven spectacle of chorines parading as take-out containers. "We deliver!" they squeal, as the insides of their white boxes light up to reveal their breasts. Somehow, the musical, in this version, manages to have at least four floor-show numbers, and Longbottom tops himself with "Fan Tan Fannie," in which the leggy Sandra Allen bumps and grinds her Asian-American heart out as a bevy of disembodied red and black fans keep time behind her.

Still, now that the story generally works, one is more aware of the weakness of the music. "Love, Look Away," "Don't Marry Me," and "I Enjoy Being a Girl" are appealing enough but lack distinction—they're third-generation copies of genre songs that Rodgers and Hammerstein mastered in earlier, greater musicals. If "Flower Drum Song" doesn't quite reach that heady ozone of exhilaration called "smash hit," the failure is due in part to the songs and in part to the romance between Mei-Li and Ta, which never really sparks. Both performers have great prowess as singers but are less persuasive as actors. Salonga's emotional range veers between simper and whimper; and Jose Llana has an arresting voice but, regrettably, a wooden presence.

Luckily, in Hwang's script, romance is only the sugar used to coat peskier issues. At one point, Mei-Li tells Ta, "Sometimes you seem one hundred per cent Chinese. Then a moment later, you become one hundred per cent American." When he asks if that makes him "one hundred per cent nothing," she disagrees. "I think you are . . . one hundred per cent both." "Is that possible?" Ta asks. Part fashion show, part night-club act, part hymn to Asian-American diversity, "Flower Drum Song" answers the question with a loud, proud shout in the affirmative. ♦

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

MEN TROUBLE

"The Truth About Charlie" and "Roger Dodger."

BY ANTHONY LANE

The new Jonathan Demme picture, "The Truth About Charlie," concerns the beautiful Regina Lambert (Thandie Newton), who returns to Paris from vacation to learn that her husband has been killed and that, far worse, the furnishings have been removed from her apartment. The deceased was a Swiss citizen named Charles, although he clearly wasn't; it is the principle of this movie that no man worth his salt should be content with the dull, unseasoned flavor of a single personality. Proof of this comes from Charles's multiple passports, from the diamonds that he seems to have purloined, and from the noms de guerre adopted by everyone who wants a piece of the booty. This group includes Joshua Peters (Mark Wahlberg) and Lewis Bartholomew (Tim Robbins), each of whom offers Regina whatever help she needs. She says yes to both of them, which is asking for trouble.

Viewers will be split between those who wonder about this silly, trumped-up story and those who already know and love the silliness for what it was. "The Truth About Charlie" is a rehash of "Charade," made by Stanley Donen in 1963 and regarded as one of the best Hitchcock movies that Hitchcock never made. Thandie Newton, in other words, is treading in the tiny footsteps of Audrey Hepburn, without appearing to enjoy herself half as much, and—there is, I fear, no way to break the news kindly—Mark Wahlberg is all that modern Hollywood can muster by way of a successor to Cary Grant. No blame attaches to Wahlberg, who was excellent in "Boogie Nights" and "The Yards," and the burden would have lain with equal weight on any of today's performers, except maybe George Clooney; one merely wonders why smooth sophistication, once a regular item on an actor's résumé, should have gone the way of the pleated pants front and the well-shined shoe. When Hepburn asked Grant, "Do you know what's wrong with you? Nothing," we smiled and swooned with a kind of complicit joy, because even Cary Grant, as Cary Grant admitted, wanted to be Cary Grant. When Thandie Newton put the same question to Mark Wahlberg, I licked my pencil, opened my notepad, and started roughing out some answers. You know what's wrong with men—all of us, not just leading men—compared with Cary Grant? Everything.

It may be unfair to harp on Donen's movie, and Jonathan Demme, one of the most nimble directors in America, must be hoping for a fresh audience, unplagued by the remembrance of films past. But it is surely his own memory of "Charade," and of its period, that he is honoring, and without that act of observance the new movie makes no sense. Having noticed that Donen was filming in Paris at a time when the New Wave was starting to roll and break, Demme has streamed the two traditions together—bright Hollywood confection meets European breathlessness—to create a tumbling style of his own. We still get glances at the monuments of Paris—the Ferris wheel, say, in the Place de la Concorde—but the city is accelerated and scrawled with a multi-ethnic funkiness that should be a rude shock to anyone who still thinks of France as an immovable feast. Demme the musical magpie, the maker of "Citizens Band" and "Stop Making Sense," is again in full flight, with regular swoops into *le hip-hop*.

The truth about "The Truth About Charlie" is that everything spins with

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energy except the middle of the film, where all the fun should start. This movie is all moons and no planet. The camera, freed from cranes and dollies, has the roaming glee of a truant schoolboy, but it demands too much of the leads; Wahlberg has to gawk at the lens and smile winningly, as if the audience were Thandie Newton, and the clunkiness of the moment simply demonstrates the vacancy of the main crush. Put bluntly, there is nothing between these two, and nothing that Demme can do about it; Wahlberg is a solid youth, and the role needs someone of more liquid identity, in whose company the heroine must melt. So, what are we left with? A chic supporting cast, for one thing, including the Korean superstar Joong-Hoon Park as a rueful baddie and Christine Boisson as the French detective who handles Regina's case; judging by the way in which she lights their cigarettes, she would handle Regina, too, if the chance arose, as befits someone who began her career in "Emmanuelle." Demme's picture fairly moans with movie references: Regina checks into the Hôtel Langlois, named after the founder of the Cinémathèque Française, and there are cameos from the director Agnès Varda and even from Anna Karina, Godard's immortal muse. It is as if Demme had tired of his set assignment—to make a lightweight thriller—and decided to write a term paper on the life and loves of the moviegoer. As a result, he has no idea whatsoever of how to end his tale; we get guns in the rain, then a so-so kiss, then a prison sequence, and finally, at the end of the credits, a pilgrimage to the grave of François Truffaut. Lovely for film buffs; everybody else, however, will have already left the theatre, not bothering to stay and guess what the charade was supposed to mean.

Mark Wahlberg and Thandie Newton in Jonathan Demme's new movie.

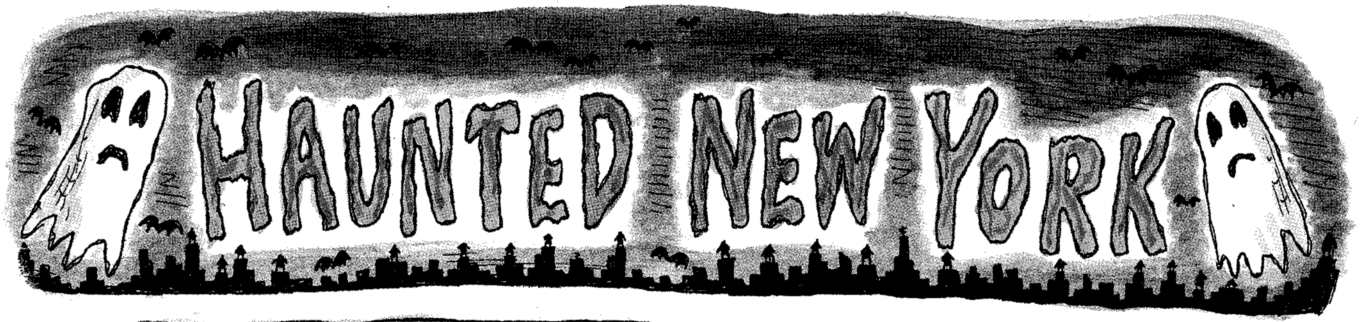
TOM BACHTELL

When the opening monologue in "Roger Dodger" comes to a close, everybody in the scene applauds. It is a tribute to the young writer-director, Dylan Kidd, and to his star, Campbell Scott, that you feel like doing the same—all the more warmly because it involved nothing more than a bunch of talking heads in a restaurant. Scott plays Roger Swanson, a New York advertising copywriter, who has trapped his friends in a stupendous lecture on the evolutionary status of the male—"Are men absolutely necessary?" What ignites the scene is its doubleness: nobody can hog a table like Roger, yet, if he is right, he barely belongs in the sty.

That is the pattern for the rest of Kidd's movie. We flinch from Roger, who kicks aside our puppyish idea that characters exist to be liked, but he fills every inch of our vision. Roger's city-slicker act has a trace of rural roughness; he has a mind of manure and a mouth like a threshing machine. His subject—the rhythm of his days, the pulse in his neck—is sex, the getting of sex, and his devout conviction that sex, rather than love, is all around, hanging like thunder in the air. "I'm like a fucking lightning rod," he explains to his sixteen-year-old nephew Nick (Jesse Eisenberg), who comes from Ohio in search of bad advice. This is a neat conceit on Kidd's part: he goes as far as he can with Roger the devil, and then gives him a Faust to play with—just look at the scarlet hellfire on Roger's cheeks, as he guides the kid to some whorish pit beneath the street. The problem is that you cannot siphon the innocence from a boy in a single night; Nick, when introduced to women, seriously informs them that he believes in inner beauty. "Have you met my nephew?" Roger sneers. "His name is Jesus."

None of this sounds like a nice evening out, either for Nick or for the rest of us, yet there are times when the movie's entertainment value verges on the scandalous. At the screening I attended, there were a couple of walkouts, which is always a good sign: if somebody is offended by a movie, the chances are that somebody else will be leaning forward and grinning into the dark. There is fine support from Roger's despairing women—his boss and lover, played by Isabella Rossellini (that suit and tie of hers in the first scene is a delicious grace note), and the two beauties, played by Jennifer Beals and Elizabeth Berkley, who team up with uncle and nephew in a bar—but there is no doubt who owns this picture. Little wonder that Campbell Scott snapped up the script after Kidd had the nerve to give it to him in a Village café; roles as meaty as this are dangerously rare, and only the most skillful players, like Scott, could fill it without showing off. It was years before I realized that he was the son of George C. Scott, and that the "C" stood for Campbell; now everything clicks. Watch the father in "The Hustler," then turn to "Roger Dodger," and you'll find the same feral will to sink one's teeth into the weakness of others. In Roger's case, he himself is weakened by his exertions, and the late closeup of his face, wreathed in morning sunlight and the fog of cigarettes, shows a hollow man; the farce of his libido has sapped even the goodness of his looks. Kidd should have stopped the movie there, although I would be sorry to have lost the wicked coda, in which Roger takes his message to the lunchroom in Nick's high school, dispensing carnal wisdom to a gang of glandular youths. The beast is back. ◆

THE BACK PAGE BY ROZ CHAST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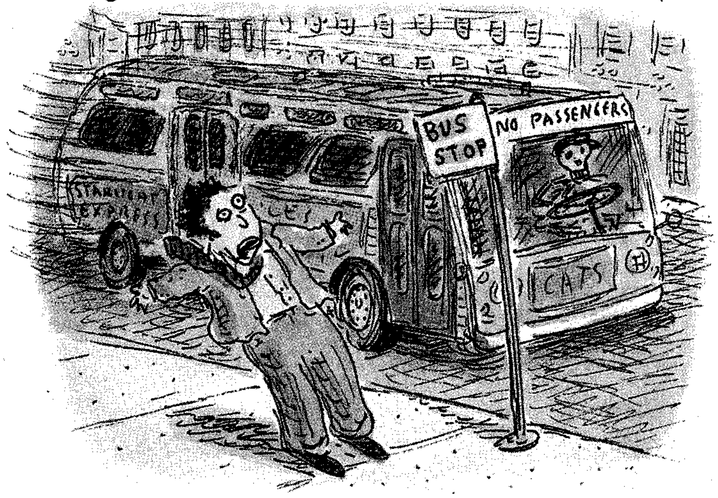
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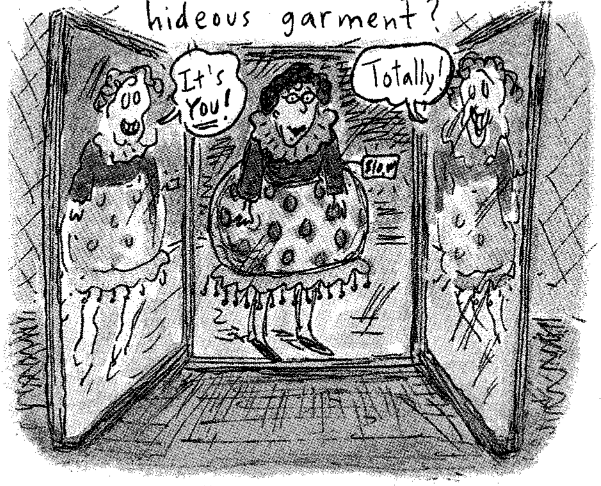
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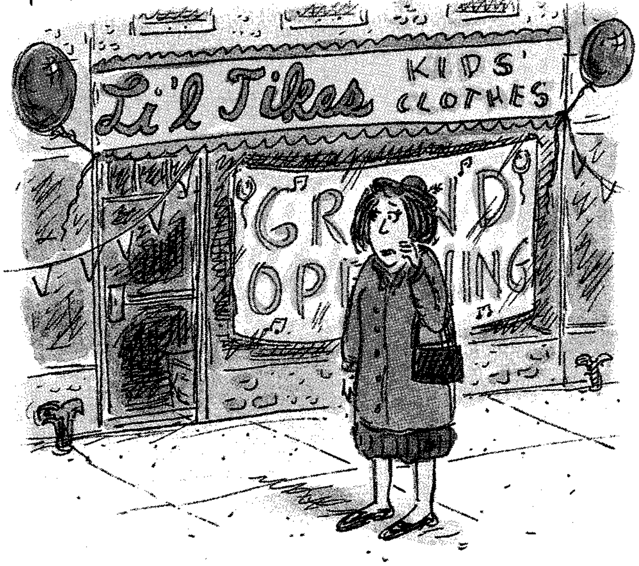
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The Ectoplasmic Super

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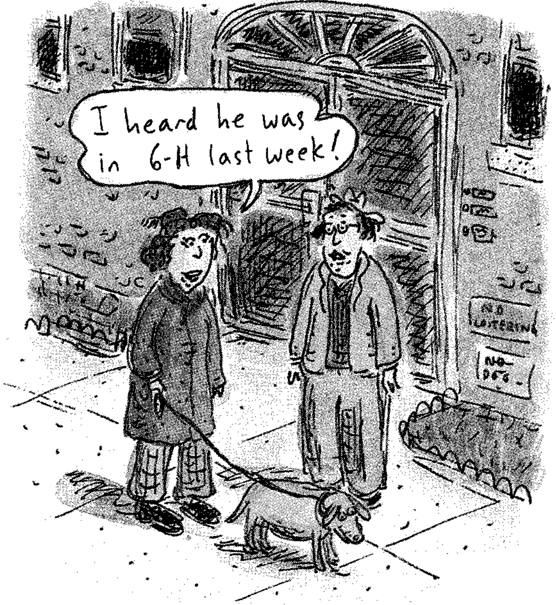
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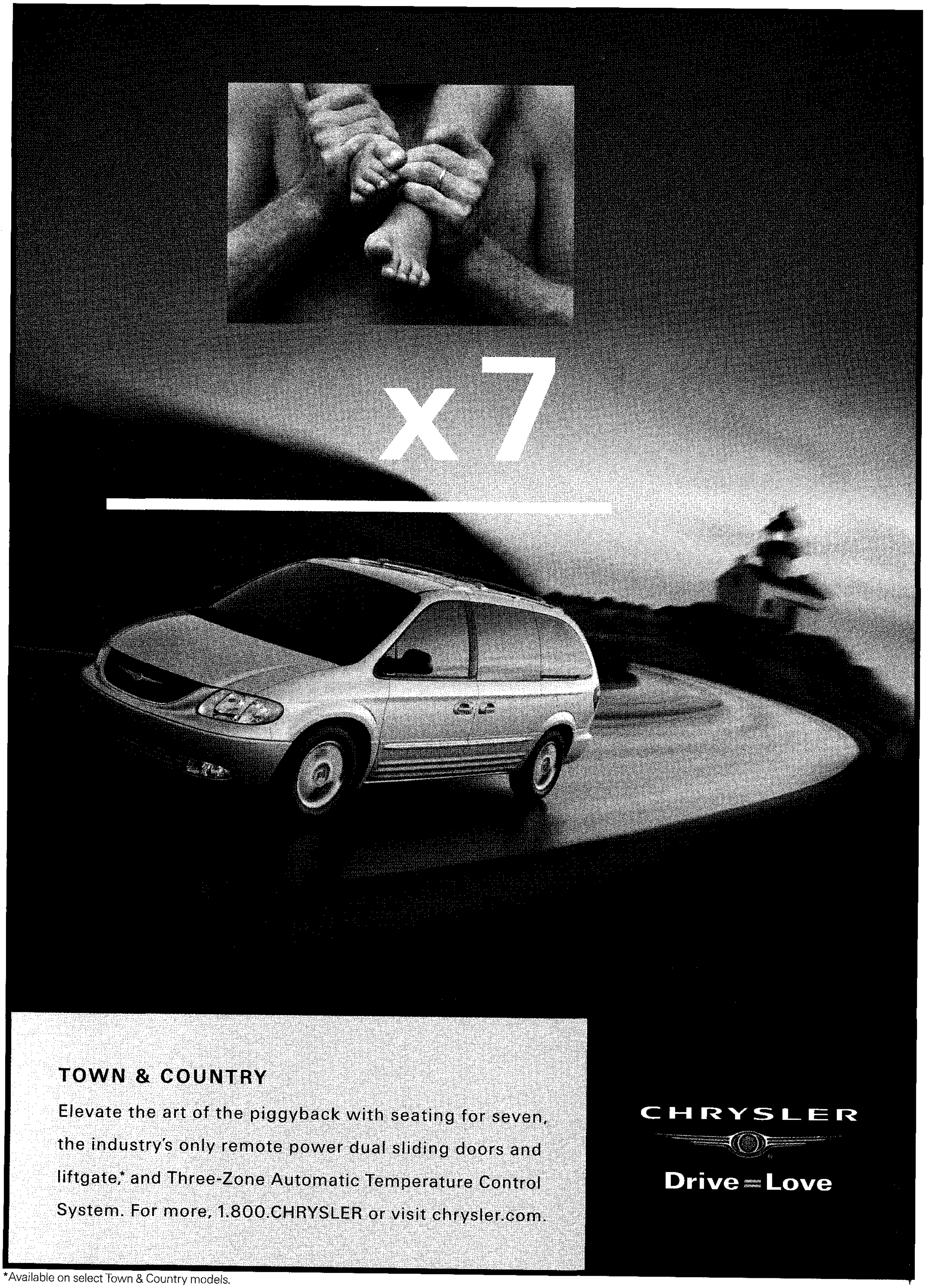
NO DOGS



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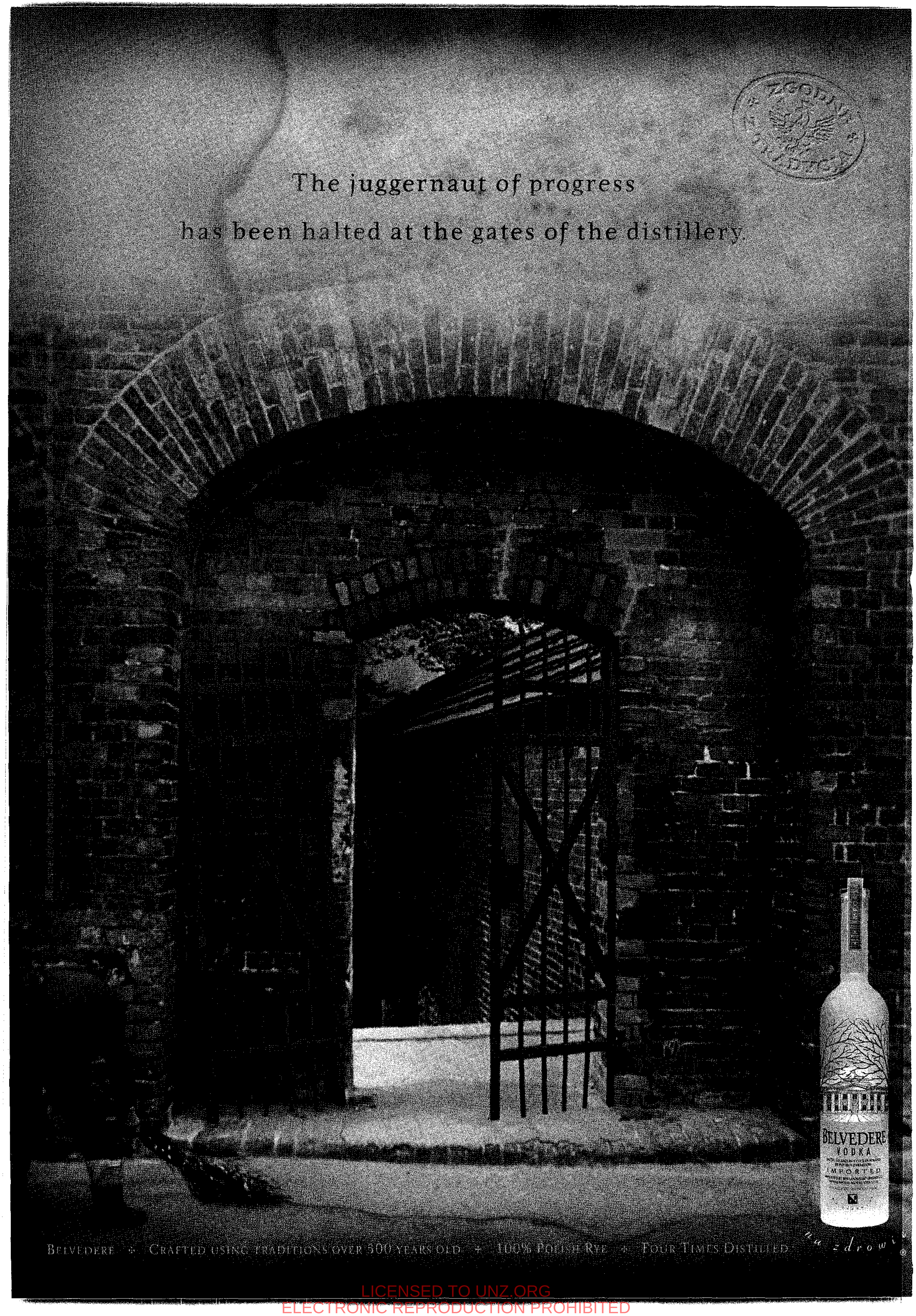
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